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Dr. Jim & Laurie Benjamin, May 2015



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Editor's LETTER



Is it time to end world depth records?

In mid-August, Dr Guy Garman - nicknamed Doc Deep - headed off into the depths off St Croix in the US Virgin Islands on a quest to break the world open-circuit depth record. He never returned, and his body was recovered a few days later.

It is, undoubtedly, a tragedy, however, while associates state that he 'knew more about deep and technical diving than anyone else on the planet', I seriously have to question the validity of this claim. The facts remain that he had only been diving for four years, had logged less than 600 dives in total, and prior to his fatal attempt to reach a target depth of 365m, his previous deepest dive had been to 265m. A 100m dive on its own is a serious undertaking, never mind tagging this onto an already extreme depth, which just seems absolutely crazy to me. It is far too big an increase in one hit.

Unfortunately, it seems that Garman and his fellow tech diving support team became wrapped up in their own hype. A quick look back at Facebook pages reveals ever-increasing depth targets after every deep dive. It appears that when they pulled off a single successful dive to a particular depth, it was seen as a green light to go deeper, and by a greater amount, and makes me question how naive they were to the risks of HPNS and other depth-related issues.

Diving is not supposed to be a competitive hobby, but we can expect to see more fatalities connected with chasing depth records unless a line is drawn in the sand. The open-circuit record has not changed a great deal in many years, which clearly shows that not only are participants at the very pinnacle of what is viable with current gas mixes and equipment, but more importantly at the limits of human endurance. The physiological and psychological stresses and strains on the body at these great depths is phenomenal, and alas too many glory hounds do not - and will not - take this into consideration.

Mark Evans, EDITOR

FACEBOOK WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/SPORTDIVEREMEA | **TWITTER** @SPORTDIVEREMEA

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PHOTOGRAPHER BARTOSZ STROZYNSKI/WWW.FIMUFO.COM

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NEWS

Each month, we collate the latest industry news from right here in the UK, as well as all over our water planet. To find out the most up-to-date news and views, check out the website:

www.sportdiver.co.uk

Lundy Splash-In 2015

Report by NEIL HOPE

The tiny island of Lundy - just three miles long and a mile-and-a-half wide – located off the North Devon coastline in the Bristol Channel welcomed divers around the UK for its annual underwater photography Splash-In competition over the weekend of 1-2 August.

Having been rescheduled from its original date due to poor weather conditions the competition attracted a good number of divers as entrants chose from four different categories (Mega to Macro; Marine Abstract; Simply Marine and Spirit of the Marine Protected Area) before presenting their chosen images to the judging team.

Taking top spot in the Marine Abstract category and also chosen as Overall Winner for his shot of an anemone entitled 'Jester's Hat', Jonathon Aird spent three dives and a total of three-and-a-half hours underwater searching for the right subject.

"Some of the other divers were struggling with the visibility for shooting the big stuff as there was a lot of detritus in the water, so I decided to look for macro subjects," explained Mr Aird who captured his winning image using a Nikon D5100 with an 18-70mm lens in an Ikelite housing. "I was looking specifically for nudibranchs around the legs of the pier but not having any luck I came across these beautiful anemones and, after taking a couple of regular shots, looked for something more abstract."

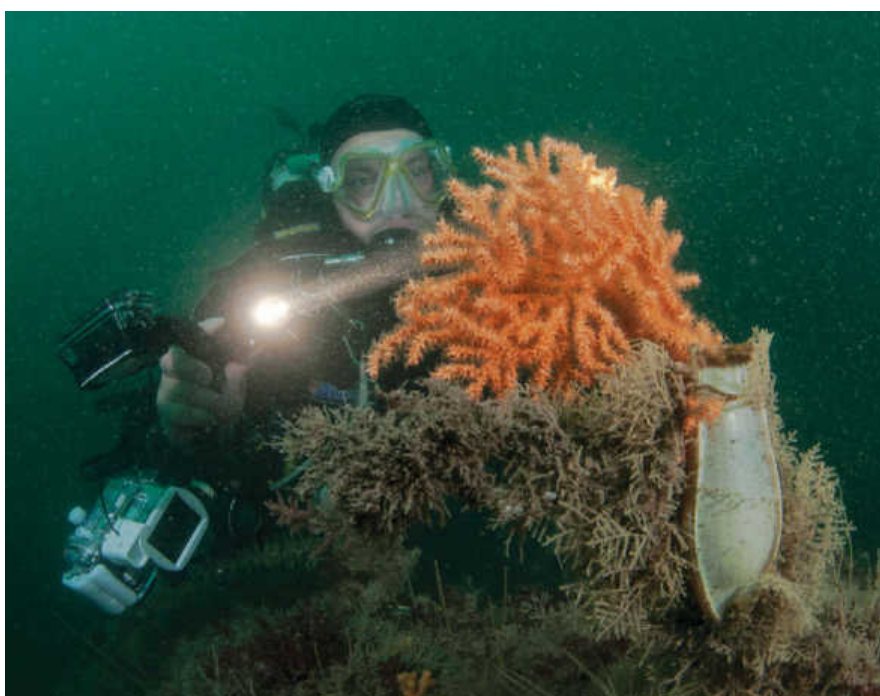
Renowned for its diverse marine life, Lundy is famous for its resident seals, pink sea fans and is the only area in the UK where five species of rare cup corals exist together. Competitors must make a twenty-two mile boat trip from the mainland to reach the granite outcrop (home to just 30 people), before descending beneath the protected waters of England's first Marine Conservation Zone, with the weather always a factor.

"Conditions were difficult as the visibility was less than usual for this time of year due to the unusually windy weather we've all been experiencing," said Beccy MacDonald, Lundy Warden and organiser of the competition. "But the images once again show how amazing and spectacular the marine life and scenery is here at Lundy and we thank everyone for their support."

Maggs Ashton's colourful 'Yellow Power' bagged first place in the Spirit of the Marine Protected Area category, while Mike Deaton's brace of grey seal images finished in top spot in both the Mega to Macro and Simply Marine categories. For more information on Lundy Island, and future Splash-Ins, visit

www.landmarktrust.org.uk/lundyisland ■





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Seal sightings suggest improving Thames health

More than a thousand Londoners have helped international conservation charity the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) with efforts to conserve marine mammals in the Thames Estuary by spotting more than 2,700 seals, porpoises, dolphins and whales over the past ten years.

The ZSL Thames Marine Mammal Sightings Survey, which launched in 2004, was designed to help conservationists develop a better understanding of how marine mammals use the Thames Estuary, in order to help conserve them.

Joanna Barker, European Conservation Projects Manager at ZSL, said: "People are often surprised to hear that marine mammals are regularly spotted in Central London. As a top predator, their presence is a good sign that the Thames is getting cleaner and supporting many fish species. The presence of these animals is also a great example of how urban environments are important for wildlife."

Highlights from the ten year report include:

- More sightings were reported around Canary Wharf than any other area along the Thames Estuary
- Many sightings were recorded in Central London, especially between the Houses of Parliament and the O2 Arena. Other sighting hotspots include Hammersmith, Southend-on-Sea and Cliffe
- Seals were seen as far upstream as Hampton Court Palace, harbour porpoises and dolphins as far as Teddington Lock and whales as far as

Gravesend

- Harbour seals were the most commonly spotted marine mammal, with more than 1,000 animals reported over the 10 year period
 - Marine mammals were found year-round throughout the Thames Estuary
 - The majority of sightings lasted less than 2 minutes and were of marine mammals swimming
 - 2013 saw the greatest number of sightings submitted (239 sightings)
 - Most sightings were of individual animals, but occasionally large groups are seen: In September 2014 100 seals were spotted at Greenwich and in November 2014 30 pilot whales were spotted near Clacton-on-Sea
- "We were pleased to see that harbour seals were some of the most commonly spotted mammals. Their numbers have dramatically declined in some parts of Scotland, so the fact that they are frequently sighted in the Thames Estuary confirms that the South East is an important area for their conservation," said Barker.
- "It's fantastic that so many people have got involved in the project - we rely on sightings to understand the whereabouts and behaviour of marine mammals in Central London. The more Londoners get involved, the more accurate our understanding of wildlife in the Thames will be. The survey is ongoing and we urge people to take part at

www.zsl.org/inthethames"

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Ocean Film Festival Returns to the UK

After a highly successful first tour in 2014, the Ocean Festival World Tour is returning to the UK.

The festival, which originates in Australia, features a brand new selection of the world's most captivating ocean-themed short films and will be shown in 24 towns and cities across the UK.

Designed to mesmerise and enthrall, the Ocean Film Festival World Tour showcases more than two hours of sublime footage taken above and below the water's surface. The films document the beauty and power of the ocean and celebrate the divers, surfers, swimmers and oceanographers who live for

the sea's salt spray, chase the crests of waves, and marvel at the mysteries of the big blue. The 2015 UK Ocean Film Festival World Tour will donate 25p from every ticket sold to support ocean conservation.

Nell Teasdale, Director Ocean Film Festival UK Tour, said: "We are very pleased to be working in partnership with Project AWARE and hope the Tour will raise awareness of the essential work undertaken by this organization, while at the same time, raising valuable funds to continue their work."

Tickets are on sale now! To find out more about the Ocean Film Festival and book tickets, visit www.oceanfilmfestival.co.uk.

Duchess of Cambridge completes PADI AOW course

The Duchess of Cambridge is now a PADI Advanced Open Water Diver. The duchess completed her course with a PADI school on the Caribbean island of Mustique a couple of years ago, but the news has only just broken and been in newspapers and news outlets all over the world.

Her husband, the Duke of Cambridge, is an experienced diver and the current president of BSAC - just as his father and grandfather were. With such a Royal seal of approval, let's hope this diving duo are able to inspire legions more of their subjects to follow in their footsteps and take up diving.



Documentary highlights marine debris problem

The Voyage of the Labyrinth has just released its first episode.

Made up of filmmakers, divers and sailors, Team Labyrinth is travelling through Southeast Asia to highlight some of the most pressing environmental issues facing our ocean planet.

Hannah Pragnell-Raasch, program specialist at Project AWARE, was lucky to get in on the action during the team's first days of filming, when the crew shot a special report looking at the problem of marine debris off Malaysia's east coast.

Despite being in a marine park, discarded fishing nets, smothering the fragile reef, became an all-too-familiar sight. Working alongside B&J Diving Centre from Tioman Island, Hannah and the crew conducted a Dive Against Debris survey, removing 30kgs of rubbish underwater in just 45 minutes.

You can see the full report by viewing Episode 1: Coral Island Clean Up, and you can also run your own Dive Against Debris surveys. Visit Project AWARE for more information. www.projectaware.org.

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Buddy Dive



Dominica

Buddy Dive opens on Dominica

After months of preparation, Buddy Dive on Dominica opened for business this weekend. Scuba divers can now experience the service and standards they are used to at Bonaire's Buddy Dive, on Dominica!

In November 2014 the adventure started with the signing of a partnership between Buddy Dive and Fort Young Hotel. Now, just over eight months later, Buddy Dive on Dominica is a fact; a new milestone for the brand. Remmert Zandstra, COO of Sapias Holding, holding company of Buddy Dive, comments: "It's always an exciting time to open a new operation. The last week I have been on site to get everything ready for opening together with the team. We have a great team here that is ready to welcome our guests and show them the beauty of Dominica both below and above water."

Buddy Dive on Dominica will consist of a

fully stocked dive retail shop, teaching facilities, rental gear, gear room, rinse tanks and outdoor showers. The operation will offer first-class diving; from boat diving at Champagne Reef or Toucari to night diving in the south of the island. The operation also caters for other activities, like whale-watch tours and sightseeing tours on land.

Buddy Dive on Dominica will be offering a variety of packages that combine both exploring the above and below water wonders of Dominica. Packages can be customised, so guests can choose exactly what they would like to do during their stay on Dominica. Packages include seven nights / eight days accommodation at the Fort Young Hotel, breakfast, airport transfer, boat diving and the marine park fee complemented with the activities of your choice.

www.buddydivedominica.com

Regaldiver launches new website

Diving holiday specialist Regaldiver has launched a brand new website.

The tour operator's new website features a fresh new look and feel, combined with enhanced functionality. The new website is mobile responsive to assist the increasing number of visitors now using handheld computer devices, such as mobiles and tablets, when searching for a diving holiday.

New features of the site include increased social media integration, enhanced search functions and improved comparison and review tools. What's more, improved navigation will help divers to drill down faster and more easily to the diving holiday information that is relevant to them.

The new website allows visitors to prepare shortlists for the side-by-side comparison of different diving holidays. A one-stop-shop allows customers to find current offers and compare the best hotel deals and liveaboard deals from a range of fleets.

Furthermore, a prominent customer review system enables visitors to read reviews about specific accommodation, liveaboards and destinations that have been posted directly onto the site by other customers. To view the new website, visit www.regal-diving.co.uk.

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Sport Diver contributors to run Cayman photo course

Frogfish Photography has teamed up with The Scuba Place to put together an exclusive underwater photography trip to The Cayman Islands.

Guests will get the chance to photograph the famous stingrays of Grand Cayman, get wonderful images of the iconic wreck of the Kittiwake, and on top of two boat dives per day, also get the chance to practice techniques throughout the day on the house reef, with unlimited shore diving.

Nick and Caroline will be on hand throughout to offer advice. Workshops, lectures and 1:1 tuition sessions will also be available. The trip will be made up of two back-to-back weeks starting on 7 November 2015. Guests will be able to tailor this trip to as many nights as they want.

With a great diversity of subjects to photograph, this trip should excite any level of

photographer, as well as divers who just want to come along for some warm water diving and Caribbean sunshine.

Nick and Caroline will be staying at Light-house Point, one of the most environmentally friendly places you could wish to stay in. The full board accommodation means excellent dining at the Greenhouse Café, which offers organic, locally sourced food.

Nick is a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society and has recently written the book *Underwater Photography Art & Techniques*. He is also chair of the Northern Underwater Photography Group, of which Caroline is secretary. They are both photojournalists, with their images and stories published in a wide range of outlets in the UK and overseas.

For more information, contact John at The Scuba Place (john@thescubaplace.co.uk) or call 0207 644 8252.

Blue Water Diving becomes PADI 5* centre

Gran Canaria-based dive centre, Blue Water Diving, has been awarded PADI 5* Dive Centre status. The new centre, located in the town of Puerto Rico, achieved its new status on 27 July. A spokesperson for the company said: "After a successful start to the summer season we have managed to achieve PADI 5* Dive Centre status."

"We offer a range of courses from total beginner to professional levels, including many Speciality courses. We have a wide range of knowledge and experience here in Gran Canaria - above and below the water! "All dives are guided by a PADI professional. Local pick-ups and drop-offs can be organised if required." For more information about Blue Water Diving, visit: www.divinggrancanaria.com.

'Doc Deep' dies in world record attempt

Diver Guy Garman, known in the diving community as Doc Deep, has died in an attempt to set a world record for the deepest scuba dive. Dr Garman was diving off St Croix in the US Virgin Islands and attempting to set a new depth record of 365m.

Having entered the water on time at 6am and descended into the depths, Dr Garman failed to return for his first scheduled stop - 38 minutes into the dive at a depth of 110m. Dr Garman's body was recovered a few days after he went missing.

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Prescription Swimming Goggles launches new website

In response to a growing number of overseas orders, Banbury-based Prescription Swimming Goggles has launched a new website. The new site, www.prescription-swimming-goggles.co.uk, offers multiple country and currency options and improved functionality to help customers select the best goggle or mask for their needs.

It is now both smartphone and tablet-friendly so anyone can conveniently place an order anywhere and anytime.

Devised by optician and swimmer James Sutton, the redesign aims to offer the widest choice and value with unrivalled service.

As the range has grown, James has looked for ways to improve how to select the best

goggle or mask with added features such as filtering to only show the most relevant goggles.

This allows specific features to be selected, such as: goggle/mask colour, goggle lens colour, brand, size, price, lens power, option to choose different lens powers in each eye.

Multiple product images and improved eye-catching background images have been added, plus a zoom feature enables goggles and masks to be seen close-up

Prescription Swimming Goggles is an SSL Secured Website providing a secure connection between the website and internet browsers.

To check out the website, visit **www.prescription-swimming-goggles.co.uk**.

World champion freediver dies in Spain

World champion freediver Natalia Molchanova has died after she was separated from her companions while recreationally freediving two miles northwest of the port of La Savina at Poniente de es Freus, Spain, on 2 August. It is believed that while diving without fins to around 30-40m, she was caught in a strong underwater current. Search efforts proved fruitless.

Natalia Molchanova was the most-decorated competitive freediver in the world, holding 41 World Records, and was a 23-time World Champion. She had a nine-minute breath-hold, could dive to a depth of 101m using a fin, and swim a distance of 234 metres with a fin. She also had a PhD in Pedagogical Science and had authored multiple scientific articles and two freediving training handbooks.



Scuba Travel raises £3,000 for Bite-Back

Scuba Travel has raised nearly £3,000 to help fund Bite-Back, the UK shark and marine conservation charity, through sponsorship of its Ironman 70.3 team and the auction of a luxury liveaboard holiday to the Maldives. Last month, Scuba Travel's elite relay team of Tony Backhurst, Caroline Worley and Sue Harrison took part in the UK's toughest Ironman 70.3 challenge in Somerset to complete the swim, cycle and run to clinch a top 20 spot in the team category.

Describing the event, director of Scuba Travel Tony Backhurst said: "There's no doubt this was a tough event but the team was strong and we all put in good performances to cross the line in an admirable time. Thank you to everyone who helped raise money to fund Bite-Back's conservation programmes." Surrey-based diver Chris Frost placed the highest bid for the Maldives holiday and he'll be jetting off to enjoy some stunning diving from MV Orion, part of the Constellation Fleet.

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DIVE DOCTOR: Medical Q&A

Dr Oliver Firth has gained considerable experience in the field of diving and hyperbaric medicine since joining LDC in 2006. He is an Approved Medical Examiner of Divers for the UK HSE, and a medical referee for the UK Sport Diving Medical Committee. He is involved in the management of all types of diving-related illness, including recompression treatment, as well as providing hyperbaric oxygen therapy for non-diving conditions. He remains a passionate diver and has participated in various expeditions and conservation projects throughout the globe.



Q: I get hayfever pretty badly. I also get seasick. Last week I was diving off the South Coast and the pollen must have got to me because I started sneezing midway through the dive - didn't think it was possible but somehow I managed to keep my reg in. After my sneezing fit I suddenly went all dizzy and disoriented, and had to abort the dive. Six days on and I'm still off-kilter, can't walk in a straight line and, to top it off, have tinnitus in my left ear. Have I damaged myself permanently do you think? What should I do next?

A: The dizzy diver is a difficult dilemma for the diving doc - lots of possible causes, some easy to treat, some not so straightforward. Usually DCI is right up there as a possibility, but in this case it sounds as though all the symptoms were triggered by your sneezing at depth, so DCI is unlikely. I think it's much more likely you've had an episode of inner ear barotrauma. Sneezing is a particularly violent act in terms of pressure changes, and it's quite possible that the pressure wave produced has ruptured the sensitive structures of the inner ear, resulting in leakage of the fluid contained within them (perilymph) through a fistula. This typically produces vertigo and tinnitus as the balance and hearing organs of the inner ear malfunction. Treatment usually starts with conservative measures such as complete bedrest and avoidance of any further pressure changes (diving, flying, coughing, sneezing, heavy lifting etc.), and with any luck the fistula will heal itself given time. Sometimes, however, surgery is needed to repair the fistula if it doesn't settle spontaneously after a few weeks. The controversial question is whether it is safe to continue diving after an episode of inner ear barotrauma has settled. It's difficult to find any good evidence to guide a decision on this, but most would advise extreme caution on subsequent dives; the presumption is that a damaged but healed inner ear is more vulnerable to re-injury than a previously undamaged one.

Q: I'm on dive holiday in Thailand with a friend - really good! Yesterday we did three dives, the first two in the morning were about 30m for 45 minutes each, and after lunch we did another to 25m for about an hour. After a bit of chilling out on the beach we decided to go for a massage but our instructor told us not to as it might cause the bends! Is this true?

A: Aching all over from the day's activities... hopefully you don't have any other symptoms of decompression sickness... This is an interesting one as it's clearly a common temptation after a day of physical activity. I don't know of any studies or evidence relating to this exact scenario, but here's a few salient features to consider. Firstly, after most dives deeper than about 6m, we know that tiny "micronuclei" form in the bloodstream and tissues - these are the seeds around which bubbles of inert gas can form and enlarge. We also know that the vast majority of these micronuclei will disappear within six hours or so, and won't cause any symptoms provided the associated bubbles are not too large or numerous. During this six-hour window, any form of vigorous exertion or tissue manipulation may have unpredictable effects - increasing blood flow to the area could conceivably enhance tissue gas elimination or precipitate problematic bubble formation. So whilst I can't categorically state that a massage would bring on a bend, there is enough of a theoretical concern here to make me wary. To be on the safe side I'd have to advise against any deep or intense massage during at least the 6 hours post-dive - probably best just to continue chilling out on the beach with some slow (non-alcoholic) rehydration instead. Iced coconut water, anyone? And if those aches don't go away, do get them checked out by a competent diving physician, won't you...

For more Q&As from Dr Oli, check out:
www.sportdiver.co.uk/divedoctor



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Photographs by NICK AND CAROLINE ROBERTSON-BROWN, GAVIN ANDERSON, BARTOSZ STROZYNSKI,
DANIEL NORWOOD, AL HORNSBY AND MARK EVANS



MANTA RAYS, MALDIVES | AL HORNSBY

Of all the great places to dive or snorkel with mantas, perhaps none is more spectacular than Baa Atoll, in the northern Maldives Islands, during the monsoon months of June - October. There are several noted manta locations, including Bathalaa and Hanifaru Bay, but it's Hanifaru that qualifies as one of the single most-unique manta - and whaleshark, by the way - sites ever discovered.

Hanifaru, a closely protected marine area allowing snorkelling encounters on only designated days each season, is a small, sand-bottomed bay approximately 15m deep, located just inside the reef line of a steep oceanic wall. When the winds are right, an up-swell is created that carries clouds of deep-water krill over the reef into a football-field sized portion of the bay. With nowhere to go, the krill are packed into a thick, living soup - and the feed is on.

Mantas quickly appear, occasionally as many as 100 to 200 at a time, swooping and soaring, mouths agape, through the swirling clouds of krill. On very special days, several whalesharks will join the fray, standing vertically in the water, content to gulp in krill without the need to move. For the snorkellers and freedivers who experience this rare phenomenon, it is a life-experience never to be forgotten.



HUMPBACK WHALES, TONGA | AL HORNSBY

Each May, a migration of behemoths begins in the seas of Antarctica. After nearly six months of gorging on krill in the cold waters, the region's humpback whales begin annual journeys northward. Some 2,000 of them swim to idyllic Tonga in the South Pacific, a trek of nearly 5,000km, where they will spend from July through October mating, giving birth, singing and socialising.

In this season, the whales can be found virtually anywhere in the archipelago's warm, clear lagoons, but especially around the Ha'apai island group. Visitors have perhaps the best opportunity of any place on the planet for near-constant sightings of these majestic, huge - adults reach 15 metres in length and weigh some 35,000kg - creatures. And, for snorkellers and freedivers (scuba is not allowed), incredible and practically indescribable in-water encounters can be virtually a daily occurrence. The whales, especially mothers being tolerant of their calves' inherent curiosity when meeting humans in the water, can be surprisingly calm and accepting of close, extended interactions. And, if you are lucky enough to find yourself in the midst of a mating competition or dominance display, with huge bulls jostling, breaching and tail-slapping, you become but a tiny, awed presence, unnoticed among a dance of titans.

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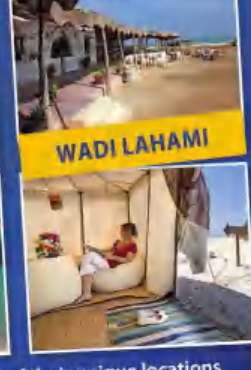
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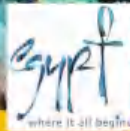
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WHALESHARKS, MEXICO | WILL HARRISON

A 'Top Big Animal Encounters' list wouldn't be complete without the largest fish in the ocean: the whaleshark. Reaching up to lengths of 14 metres and weights of 20 tonnes, these creatures truly are massive. But don't be fooled - whalesharks are some of the most graceful, placid animals in the ocean and offer divers (or, more frequently, snorkellers) the opportunity for some mesmerising close encounters. Though whalesharks do have teeth (several thousand of them, in fact), they are tiny and not used for eating. These animals are filter feeders, and enjoy a diet that predominantly consists of plankton, krill and small fish.

So where's best for a whaleshark encounter? That's an easy one: Mexico's Yucatan peninsula. While you can enjoy encounters with these underwater behemoths in locations such as Indonesia, the Philippines and the Red Sea, there is no beating Mexico, both in terms of the opportunity to encounter the animals in the first place and the quality of those encounters. It's all down to migration patterns: each year huge numbers of these fish migrate north up Mexico's Caribbean coastline, congregating in vast numbers. While diving with these congregations is not allowed, visitors are allowed to snorkel. Add to this the chance of seeing manta rays and dolphins in among the throngs of sharks and it's easy to see why this experience is rated as being one of the best you can have under the waterline - and without even having a tank on your back!

BASKING SHARKS, SCOTLAND | GAVIN ANDERSON

Every summer right off our own British Isles' westerly coastlines comes a creature of mega-sized proportions. The second largest fish in the sea after the whaleshark is just as majestic and harmless. Basking sharks come to our shores every summer when our waters warm up and the plankton blooms. If you live in the south of England they can appear as early as May, and if you're up nearer the north of Scotland, you might have to wait as late as July. At first they come in small groups but, at the peak, can be found in quite large congregations. With their large broad dorsal and sweeping tail fins, and huge gaping mouths, when you first see them underwater it's the most-awesome experience - and all you need is your mask, fins and snorkel, and an expert to take you to where they are. Shane Wasik set up Basking Shark Scotland based in Oban three years ago and has introduced countless lucky folk to these wonderful creatures. He saw a chance to offer one-, two- and three-day trips to snorkel with basking sharks in the months of June, July and August. Using exceptionally fast and comfortable boats, he saw the potential to take both individual tourists, families and wildlife adventures out to experience the thrill of being in the water with them. There is a code of practice and a shark's space is respected. Groups are limited to about four snorkellers and one guide in the water at once. To keep warm, a thick wetsuit, gloves and a hood are recommended, as water temps can be as low as 13 degrees C. A lot of surface spotting by everyone onboard is required for the first hour or two on a trip, but if you're lucky you can spend loads of time in the water with the sharks on a good day - and you'll be happier if you're in a fit condition! Basking sharks were once hunted almost to extinction, but numbers seem to be recovering. In 2012, up to 900 were spotted on one day in an aerial survey of the northwest coast of Scotland. We are discovering more and more every year about these majestic creatures. A project by Scottish Natural Heritage to tag the species in Scottish waters has just been extended and has found the sharks are travelling up to 1,900 miles in some cases before reaching the water off the west coast.



GREAT WHITE SHARKS, GUADALUPE ISLAND | AL HORNSBY

There is very little on earth - or under the sea - that compares with being face-to-face with a six-metre-long great white shark with no cage bars between you. It's a very different experience than cage-diving at the surface with the sharks attracted by chum. The sharks are calm and unaggressive, acting like other top-end predators in their own dominated worlds - curious, utterly unafraid but apparently quite interested in a close-up view of a human. And, if you happen to be that lucky human, the thrill is sublime.

Off Guadalupe Island, Mexico, each year from July through November, more than 100 migrating great whites make for frequent encounters, in calm, clear - like up to 40 metres and more - warm water. While the surface-cage encounters are also thrilling, it's the 6-10m deep, perched-on-top-of-the-cage encounters that are the most special. Unaffected by food in the water, a shark will come in slowly, turning its huge head to affix you with a black, fathomless eye from only a metre or two away. In such quiet moments, you can clearly see not only the sharks' powerful beauty, but also the extreme violence of their lives, in the bite marks from matings, in the deep gouges and scratches from their immense, struggling elephant seal prey.

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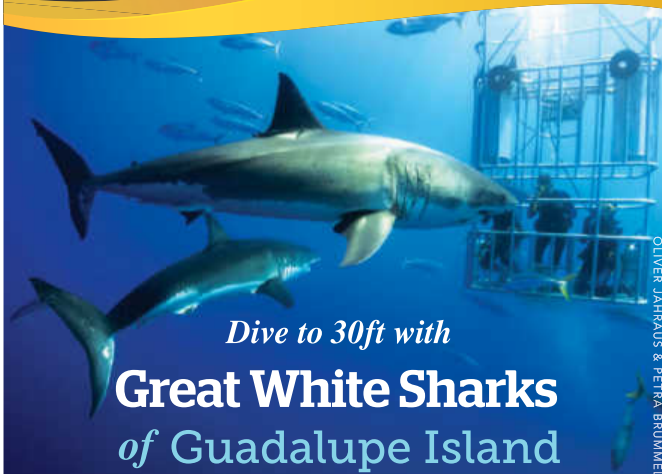
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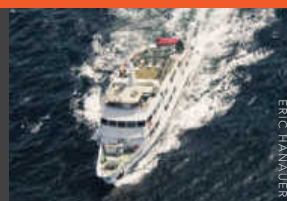
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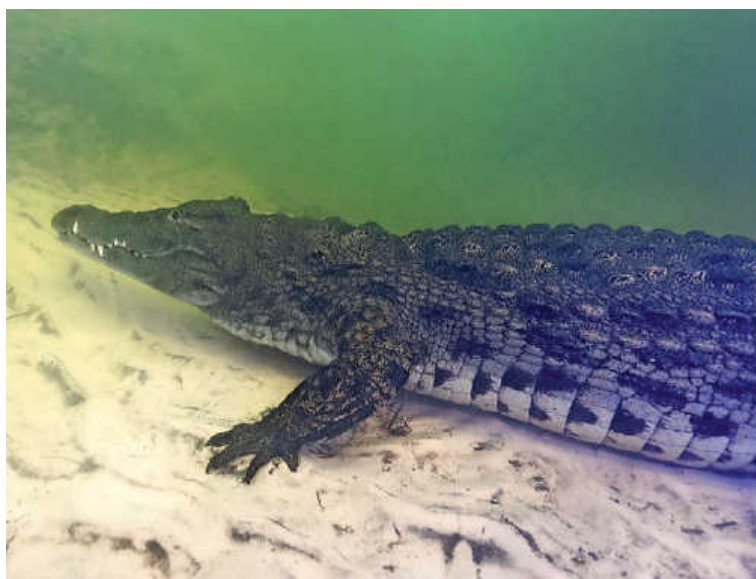




DUGONGS, EGYPT | MARK EVANS

Dugongs are one of the rarest sea-going mammals in the world, yet in the south of Egypt, there are a couple of unassuming bays which offer you a much better-than-average chance of encountering one of these gentle giants. Sometimes called a 'sea cow', these behemoths can reach lengths in excess of three metres and weigh more than 500kg, yet they are very docile, and you can carefully approach them quite closely for some superb photo opportunities.

The area around Abu Dabbab, near Marsa Alam, is a hotspot for dugong activity, possibly thanks to the prolific seagrass growth smothering the bottom of the bays - a dugong's favourite food. Many dive centres run special dugong shore-diving day trips to the region, such is the appeal of these ugly-but-cute creatures. Seeing them Hoover their way across the seabed like an underwater vacuum cleaner is a fantastic experience.



NILE CROCODILES, BOTSWANA | AL HORNSBY

You spend your days travelling among the Botswana Delta's hundreds of tributaries until you spot what you are looking for - a four-metre-long Nile crocodile, basking in the sun. At your boat's approach, it slides into the water, disappearing from sight. Out at mid-stream, along with two guides, you back-roll simultaneously, going straight to the bottom - there is no surface-time near silhouette-hunting crocs.

Slowing yourselves on the bottom in the 1-2 knot flow, you move through 13 degrees C, one to three metre vis water to near the bank, where crocs will hide among the fallen trees and irregular terrain. Then, there it is... an utterly fascinating, seemingly prehistoric creature, huge on the bottom, its glare-white teeth shining oddly in the gloom. On some dives there's only a quick glimpse before it moves; on others, you'll get a photo or two before it's gone, if you've seen one at all. And, occasionally, the croc remains utterly still, allowing you image after image from less than a metre away.

Once a croc has gone - or had not been quickly found - it's back out across the bottom to mid-channel, where the boat moves above you. You remove your kit, ascend straight up together under the 'shadow' of the boat, hand up your stuff and immediately pop in over the side. Then, grinning, you start the search for your next croc. Whew...



GREY SEALS, THE FARNE ISLANDS NICK AND CAROLINE ROBERTSON-BROWN

The Farne Islands are a rugged group of islands just off the Northumberland coastline and they are home to one of the largest grey seal colonies in the world. With around 1,000 seal pups being born each autumn, there are plenty of inquisitive young seals that are happy to approach and interact with the divers and photographers that flock here to visit. The diving here is excellent, but the highlight is to get intimately close to these wonderful, playful creatures. You can dive along rocky inlets, covered in colourful corals, and then suddenly find yourself with four or five of these endearing animals, playing and chasing each other, or they may be snoozing while wedged between two rocks. Stay shallow, among the kelp or on a sandy seabed, and they might even come right up to you, tugging on your fins, or even putting their mouths around your camera. The best way to see them is not to seek them out or try to follow them. Play it cool. They will come to you, and once they do they will stay with you, giving you one of the most-privileged wildlife encounters the UK has to offer.



GOLIATH GROUPE, FLORIDA | MARK EVANS

Some 48 miles offshore from the west coast of Florida lies the wreck of the Fantastico, a 60-metre Honduran freighter which went down in 1993, in what has become known as 'the Storm of the Century'. It was carrying fertiliser from Miami to Tampa when it went down, taking seven of the crew of ten with it.

So what, yet another wreck, I hear you say. Well, it just so happens that this shipwreck, which lies in two distinct sections, with a flattened midships between, provides shelter for one of the most-impressive fish in these waters - Goliath grouper. And not just one, or two, we are talking triple digits... Goliath grouper are absolutely enormous, easily weighing upwards of 500lb and measuring around two metres long for the whoppers, so coming face-to-face with one is a memorable experience. Multiply that by 100, and you get some idea of what a dive on the Fantastico at the right time of year can be like. It is actually quite intimidating to be surrounded by these beasts, especially when they resolutely stand their ground when you approach, and emit an underwater 'boom' to warn you away.

The wreck itself is also very photogenic, with a large mast and crow's nest, all covered in marine growth, but in the brief time we had on it, the Goliaths demanded - and got - all our attention. I can't wait to go back and do it again on a rebreather so I can get really up close and personal!



LEOPARD SEAL, ANTARCTICA | MARK EVANS

Leopard seals are a fierce predator, so named because of their spotted coats and large jaws. They look totally different to other seals, with large, almost-reptilian heads and big, streamlined bodies that are capable of travelling at over 25mph when in full hunting mode. They can weigh up to 450kg and measure over four metres long. They eat fish, penguins and even other seals. Yet despite being at the top of their game when it comes to hunting prey, they are also very inquisitive and will approach divers quite closely to check them out, which can make for some extremely exciting encounters. Bulkied up with drysuits and other cold-water equipment, divers in Antarctic waters will be dazzled by the acrobatic movements of this sleek killer, which has the unnerving habit of gaping its toothy jaws up close and personal. Make sure you have your camera ready...

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SIMON SAYS...

Simon R Chance, manager, PADI Diving Society and PADI Retailer & Resort Associations

ANGLESEY AGAIN!

Arrival at the recent ScubaFest was a little unconventional for me this year, my trusty van having decided to shed some weight – in the form of four large and very important-looking ball bearings from the CV joint – just as I pulled off the A55 into Holyhead. Luckily, an understanding tow-truck driver took me to 'ScubaFest Central' to offload some important gear there, en route to a garage just a few doors along from Martin and Caroline Sampson at Anglesey Divers. With some further assistance from your esteemed Editor, Mark Evans, and my colleagues Terry and Danielle, the remaining PADI, Project AWARE and RNLI flags, banners,

posters and pull-ups were decanted into alternative transport and, logistics completed, we were ready for the weekend. And what a weekend it was! Although the trip up had been a rather rainy experience, the sun – which had broken through as I crossed the Menai Straits – stayed with us almost right through, which made the idea of 'glamping' in the Sport Diver mega-tent (thank you, Outwell Tents) even more attractive. Inspired by Mark and Will's 'Camp and Dive' pieces (of which, there are more to come!), I eschewed a room in the Holyhead Activity Centre and opted instead for a blow-up mattress, a sleeping bag,

and evenings swapping stories with diving friends around a barbecue bowl full of shisha coals. Which is what the whole thing is about, really; divers just coming together to do what we like best, celebrating UK diving and sharing the experience among ourselves and others. All of which is good for the sport, as there were a lot of kayakers and coasteering enthusiasts around this year, and quite a few heads were turned by all the diving activity (and the shiny, sexy new kit on display!). Already fairly full, the new-look PADI Pool Parties on Saturday and Sunday, run over at the Holyhead Leisure Centre by Martin and Caroline, were stretched even further as these ingenues became converts to the cause...

The new look to these pool parties are one of many themes from the weekend which you will see repeated in the months to come; manufacturers innovating on our behalf, divers ReActivating their skills, the RNLI 'Divesafe' and 'Respect the Water' campaigns, some more camp-and-dive exploits from Sport Diver staff – and a whole host of new folk, young and old, taking the plunge for the first time. It's going to be a great second half!



Happy divers return from a RIB shuttle to a local wreck site

The PADI Diving Society has been in existence since 1997, and from humble beginnings has grown substantially, within a few years reaching heady heights of 'world's biggest diving club'. With membership now standing at over 180,000 keen, active divers across the planet, the PADI Diving Society represents a formidable 'tribe'. Now all three sectors of the PADI Diving Society - Americas, Asia-Pacific and Europe, Middle East and Africa - have moved from been connected but fractured, uniting under a global banner and becoming one entity, with a unified approach and single magazine title reaching all members, everywhere. www.padi.com/scuba-diving

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INAUGURAL PADI WOMEN'S DIVE DAY A HUGE SUCCESS

18 July 2015 may very well go down as a historic event for women divers, as it marked the inaugural PADI Women's Dive Day - a global initiative created to celebrate female divers everywhere and drive interest in the sport of diving among women. When PADI put the call out to its worldwide members, dive centres and resorts to organise Women's Dive Day events, the response was immediate and awe-inspiring, with all seven continents coming together to host more than 335 events in 65 countries. Thousands of women took to the water to dive together on the same day, including women dive groups and female industry icons, such as Hollywood stuntwoman, Miss Scuba founder and PADI Course Director Szilvia Gogh, and accomplished underwater photographer and newly inducted Women Divers Hall of Fame member Amanda Cotton.

"We are very humbled by the overwhelming response and participation from PADI Members, Dive Centres and Resorts worldwide," said Kristin Valette, PADI Americas vice president of marketing and communications. "Not only did the 335 events help highlight the significant and meaningful contributions female divers have made to the sport, but each event also helped increase awareness among women about the opportunities diving presents."

Events ranged from female-friendly shark dives in the Bahamas to more inclusive, family-style picnics in Hawaii. PADI Americas hosted an event on Catalina Island, California which attracted dozens of divers and industry sponsors, including Cressi, Scubapro, Diving Unlimited International (DUI), Huish Outdoors (Bare and Zeagle), and Sherwood Scuba. Some enthusiasts gathered for group dives, while others visited PADI Dive Centres and Resorts for events to try diving through PADI Discover Scuba® Diving or refresh their skills with the PADI ReActivate™ program. One dive shop's event was reportedly so successful that they plan to hold a monthly PADI Women's Dive Day. Here is a snapshot of related events which took place around the globe:

- New Zealand: Dive! Tutukaka held a Drysuit Specialty as well as a boat dive at Blue Maomomos Arch (rated by Jacques Cousteau as one of the ten dive sites on the planet). Following the dive, participants jumped into the water for a swim in mermaid fins, which isn't for the faint of heart as it is currently winter in New Zealand.
- Philippines: Divenet Philippines assembled a group of nearly 50 female divers at Anilao, Batangas, where they participated in rescue and refresher courses and hosted a contest for the best underwater selfie.
- Bahamas: Stuart Cove's Aqua Adventures gathered more than 25 women to kick off the day with morning dives surrounded by snapper, surgeon and damselfish, an afternoon group lunch, and a grand-finale shark adventure where staffers fed the beautiful Caribbean reef sharks.
- France: Aquatile Plongée divers went out for a shallow dive dressed in their best Mary Poppins attire, and even enjoyed a delicious themed cake after diving.
- Russia: Attendees at DivePrim ventured out to Verhovskogo Islands in the Sea of Japan, where they were treated to a masquerade party, followed by an underwater greeting by Poseidon and his mermaids at the dive site.
- South Africa: With no ladies on staff, the PADI instructor purchased a pink wetsuit for the occasion, where Aquamania and Blue Ocean Dive Resort joined forces to host a ladies-only PADI Advanced Open Water course at a renowned dive site known for its ragged tooth sharks.
- United Kingdom: Clad in pink tutus, more than a dozen women (and men) from Bouley Bay Dive Centre dove to raise money to support breast cancer charities.
- Spain: Two boats of women clad in neon pink tank tops - and in high spirits (even doing the wave at one point) - participated in a day of diving, courtesy of Buceo Cabo La Nao.

For more information about PADI Women's Dive Day, visit: www.padi.com/women-dive or email: womendive@padi.com. And mark your calendars for next year's PADI's Women's Dive Day, which is tentatively scheduled for 16 July 2016.

LEADING THE WAY

I am indebted to Mick Turner who, regular readers may recall, ran the PADI Discover programmes in the pool at ScubaFest



Anglesey last year, and who dropped us a line recently to confirm three newly-crowned PADI Master Scuba Divers at Reefers and Wreckers in Barrow.

Try-dives in Turkey lit the flame in Lisa Dickinson, who started diving with Mick as recently as June last year. PADI Open Water Diver certification in hand, Lisa's first sea dive followed soon after in the Farne Islands, where she was amazed by the quality and variety of marine life in UK waters. Further PADI Specialties followed and, before she knew it, Lisa found herself in the Red Sea, surrounded by hammerheads as she clocked up her 50th dive! With her PADI Rescue Diver programme due a week or so later at Capernwray, Lisa's PADI Master Scuba Diver certification seems to have followed as a natural consequence of just taking her diving forward at her own pace. Joining her in success are father-and-daughter buddies Dave and Aggie Groombridge, who also completed their final PADI Speciality in the Red Sea just a few weeks before going to press. Dave modestly describes his achievements as "proof that you can teach an old dog a new trick"; he and teenager Aggie also took their first breaths underwater in a PADI Discover session, a couple of years ago, and have remained "immersed in constant support, encouragement and friendship" from their dive buddies at Reefers and Wreckers ever since. While progressing to PADI Master Scuba Diver they have enjoyed everything from diving with the seals in the North East of England, to close encounters with hammerheads while enjoying the magnificent reefs and wrecks in the Red Sea.

Congratulations, as always, to Lisa, Dave, Aggie and all PADI Master Scuba Divers!

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MY OCEAN NEWS

Domino Albert,
Communications Manager

When it comes to reducing ocean litter, how much is enough? In July, the European Parliament (EP) voted in Plenary in Strasbourg on the Pietikainen report, a circular economy report calling on the European Commission to increase its headline marine litter reduction target from 30 percent to 50 percent reduction by 2025. Project AWARE joined Seas At Risk and its members in urging Members of the European Parliament to support this report. I was delighted that our collective voice was heard when the Plenary adopted the call for a 50 percent marine litter reduction target by 2025 rather than the original 'headline' reduction target of 30 percent by 2030 contained in the Commission's Communication. Even though the target isn't legally binding, it sends an important signal to policy makers that 30 percent is too low considering the seriousness of the marine debris problem.

The only piece of EU legislation that currently deals with marine litter is the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, but implementation to date has been weak. Member states are struggling to deal with the primary source of marine litter - our over-consumption and careless use of resources. The circular economy aims to address that, replacing resource extraction and subsequent dumping with greater reclamation, reuse, reparability and recycling. It provides a win for the ocean as well as a better model from growth and jobs in the future.

The revised, more-ambitious Circular Economy Package, including the legislative review of recycling targets, is expected at the end of this year. We're hopeful it will contain the necessary measures to drive the transition to a zero-waste society and ultimately an end to marine litter - something that all divers and Project AWARE supporters want to see happen.

DIVER GETS SWIMMING TO PROTECT SHARKS

Divers are some of sharks' biggest fans. These vital creatures are critical to marine ecosystems but they're in danger. The good news is that divers will go to great lengths to protect them. Scuba diver and Project AWARE supporter Natalie Parrinder has done just that.

Like many ocean enthusiasts, Natalie wasn't always aware of the dangers posed to numerous shark species around the world, but upon learning the facts, Natalie reached out to Project AWARE to find out how she could help make a difference, and protect her beloved ocean friends. Combining her love of swimming and desire to raise funds for a cause she cares about, Natalie organised a Finathon fundraiser event. Through her Finathon, Natalie, who had never before swam further than one kilometre in a single day, pledged to swim two kilometres per day over the course of five days - totalling 10km! She found her goal both challenging and motivating. With the support and contributions of her community, Natalie was able to raise gen-



erous funds for Project AWARE to support shark conservation efforts around the world.

A Finathon can be as simple as a few laps of your pool, an island relay or wacky races in shark suits! Put your fins on for sharks and get swimming. Visit: www.finathon.org.

CHARITY AUCTION IN SUPPORT OF OCEAN PROTECTION

Amazing prizes have been donated to Project AWARE for their 2015 Charity Auction! Prizes up for grabs range from a fabulous seven-night accommodation package at the Malapascua Exotic Island Dive Resort, including ten dives for two people, generously donated by Ultimate Diving, to stunning jewellery donated by both Aquamarine and Reef Jewelry.

The online silent auction opens on 1 October and closes on 24 October during DIVE 2015. Winning bids will be announced at the Sport Diver Awards 2015 ceremony that will be held on Saturday 24 October 2015. The event promises to be a great night filled with fun, laughter, and diving celebrities, including ocean explorers Monty Halls and Andy Torbet.

"Project AWARE is a charity close to my heart tackling some of the ocean's toughest challenges in our favourite dive sites, in our communities, and at the highest levels of government," said Mark Evans, Sport Diver Editor. "We are very pleased to be supporting this wonderful organisation and hope people are generous in their online bidding."

"We look forward to announcing the winners

at the Sport Diver Awards 2015 gala evening," he added.

Top prizes for the silent auction have been donated by long-term Project AWARE supporters, dive businesses, and dive industry manufacturers. Some of the items up for auction include an amazing five-day dive package in Marsa Alam donated by Emperor Divers, a £400 holiday voucher from Dive Safari Asia, £100 voucher from Anchor Dive Lights and a Chieftain rucksack donated by Beaver Sports, plus many more fabulous prizes are waiting for your generous bids!

For more information about the Project AWARE auction, and to view all of the items going under the hammer at DIVE 2015 and the Sport Diver 2015 Awards ceremony, contact the Project AWARE team at: info@projectaware.org.uk.

To place your online bid and buy tickets for the Sport Diver 2015 Awards ceremony, taking place on 24 October, visit: www.projectaware.org.

Happy bidding!



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
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Shore diving, dayboat diving, liveaboard diving... rig diving?
WILL HARRISON visits Malaysia's famous Seaventures dive rig

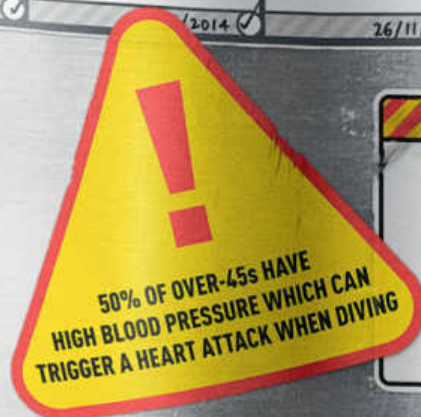
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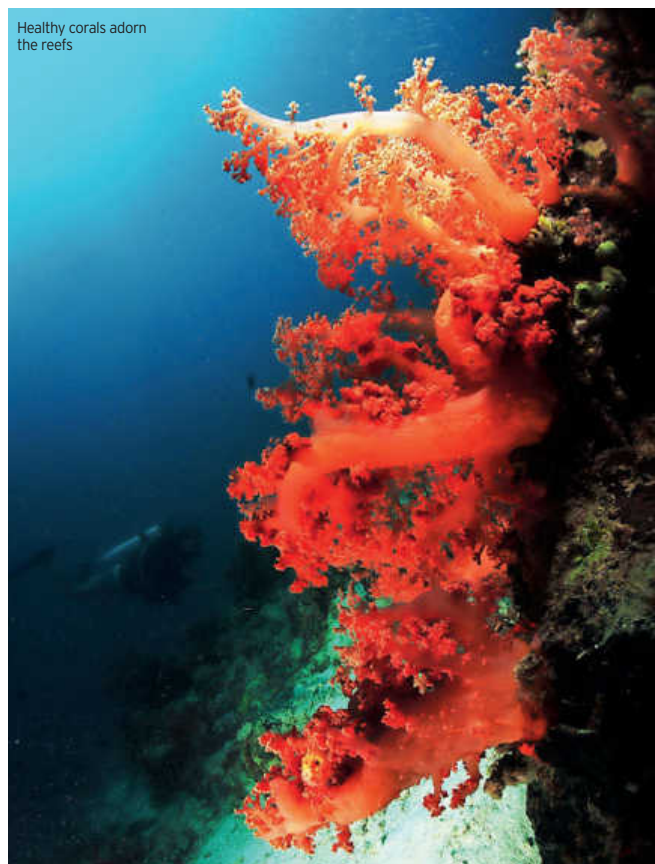




Large schools of fish
congregate on the
Sipadan reefs



Turtles are a common
sight off Mabul



Healthy corals adorn
the reefs

When it comes to travel, it tends to be the unique experiences that stick in our memories longest. It is a great deal harder to recall a time or a venue if you've been to a multitude of similar places. Monotony breeds blurriness: was it 2010 or 2011? Did I go for one week or two? Who was it that I went with? It is the never-before-or-since instances and the once-in-a-lifetime encounters (good and bad) that are recallable.

The Seaventures Dive Rig, a decommissioned exploration platform, lies off the coast of Mabul Island, one of the outlying islets off the northeast coast of Borneo, close to the world-famous dive destination of Sipadan. Once stationed off the coast of Brunei, the rig was bought and moved to its current location with the specific intention of turning it into a dive resort. A decommissioned exploration platform turned into a dive resort... How's that for unique?

Bouncing atop the glassy blue water of the Celebes Sea, the sun shining furiously overhead, the outline of the rig appeared on the horizon before that of its low-lying neighbour, Mabul. As we moved closer, its shape became clearer and soon enough I found myself staring up at the unmistakable old helipad, the rig's defining feature that juts out from the main structure like a beak from a bird's head. Painted in vivid blues and yellows, it was an arresting sight, a bird of paradise.

Access to the rig is gained via a large elevator that transports guests between the main deck and the waterline (and below, but more on that later...). It is on this main deck where all the action happens, which when it comes to dive trips basically involves diving, eating and socialising. The deck is spacious, with the dive area, canteen and bar all located in clearly defined areas.

Within no time I had signed all the necessary paperwork, dropped my kit off in the necessary spot and been shown to my room. Seaventures has a variety of rooms available to guests, from single beds in dorm rooms to a luxuriously spacious room fitted out specifically for families. The rooms have been fitted to an excellent standard and make for a more than comfortable place to lay your head after a day in the water. The best part, naturally, is that because of the self-contained nature of the rig, the rooms are just a few flights of stairs away from the main deck, so whether you're diving, dining or wining, you've never got far to go.

The dive area is well laid out, with plenty of space to store your gear, kit-up when it's time to dive and then, once you're out of the water, rinse everything off. It is also, very sensibly, located right next to the lift, so getting in and out of the water is a breeze. Many divers talk of the luxury of having a dive lift on dayboats and liveaboards, but to have one on your resort... now that's luxury (and lazy!).

Seaventures: The Story

Seaventures, built in Panama, is a jack-up accommodation module previously used in the oil and gas industry. It was towed and used in different locations until decommissioning in 1985 where it was left in a shipyard in Singapore awaiting its fate.

Its next journey began when an ex Chief Minister came across the great metal structure and had the vision and foresight to see its potential. He wanted to breathe new life into it and revive it as a hotel that could be situated right in the thick of it, in the middle of the sea.

Not only was this an opportunity for something different, but also as something that embraced eco-tourism - there would be no need for chopping down trees or piling into the sea. It was a hotel that could be constructed without damaging marine life or upsetting the marine ecosystem.

Originally it was to be a hotel geared towards fishing - the perfect opportunity to make the most of the teeming marine life that would thrive in the shelter of the structure's six legs. With this in mind, the rig was refurbished in Labuan. However, it was a little ahead of its time - tourism was not quite ready for this kind of resort.

It was decided to relocate the rig to Mabul, close to Sipadan with the sole intention of providing divers with a base for one of the best dive sites in the world. The rig has been at its current location since 1997, where the structures and shelter have created a haven for fish, making it what it is today.

www.seaventuresdive.com



Fish life in the area is prolific

The lift, ultimately, is the cornerstone of life on Seaventures Dive Rig, representing the dive freedom that the resort has been set up to offer: guests to Seaventures are offered unlimited house reef diving.

While I only dived the house reef once I met several divers during my three-day stay who dived it plenty. One couple had particularly enjoyed having an easily navigable house reef to undertake their first dives without a guide - the rig's supporting pillars act as excellent pointers to steer divers around the rig in a circuit. It really is a doddle to navigate. So what can you see? Well, quite a bit actually, and given the rig's location in the heart of the Coral Triangle that's no real surprise. What was a surprise was the size of some of the critters encountered, particularly a couple of scorpionfish who'd made a home of some old tyres - they were huge! There is also a metal grid-like structure that has been sunk directly beneath the rig, which was home to various species of fish. While the site doesn't compete with other nearby spots on Mabul, Si Amil and Sipadan, it really is a cracker for less-experienced divers who want to get plenty of guide-free practice in, or new photographers looking to hone their skills. Or lazy divers... as alluded to previously, the lift actually takes you below the

The rig at sunset



waterline - no giant strides or rolls of any kind, just a matter of waiting for the weight to be lifted from your shoulders and letting the sea take over.

Of course, most divers visiting this part of the world won't just want to dive the house reef. With gorgeous islands scattered all around, there is plenty of excellent diving on offer, from world-class muck diving sites to the deep drop-offs and pelagic-filled waters of Sipadan. During my stay in Malaysia, I was lucky enough to encounter a wide variety of creatures, from the weird and wonderful to the spectacular, from a hairy frogfish to a school of hammerheads.

Deciding which islands to head out to is, again, up to the guest. Sipadan, Mabul and Kapalai are visited on a daily basis and it's a simple case of signing up if you fancy it. Sipadan is, invariably, the most popular and it is worth noting that you won't necessarily always get a spot - demand is high and the number of boats granted permits to visit is limited, with resorts having a fixed quota. So sign up when you get the chance. But it's not all about Sipadan. Mabul has some cracking sites filled with nudibranchs and resting turtles. Islands further afield, such as Si Amil, which is perhaps the most picture-perfect of the lot and has one of the best muck diving sites I have ever experienced - a sandy slope awash with tiny creatures, as well as a few bottles and old shoes - need to be booked in advance.

Thanks to Sipadan's depth, Seaventures is also able to offer technical diving. With many sharks, particularly hammerheads, often found in deeper water, there is plenty of reason to venture down a little further. If you are a technical diver already, then it's just a case of buddying up with one of the tech instructors on the rig. If you're not yet qualified and fancy learning, Seaventures offers the full PADI TecRec service. And what a place to learn!

Away from diving, guests can prop up the bar on the main deck, relax in hammocks on the helipad or, for those inclined to experience a spot of island life, head over to Mabul on the shuttle speedboat. However you decide to fill your time, the important thing is that it's down to you. And that's what Seaventures is all about - the relaxed nature of rig life and the magic of the Coral Triangle make this a truly unique dive holiday experience. As the resort's owners put it: "The Seaventures Dive Resort truly is a novelty alternative to any dive resort and is ideal for divers wanting to maximise their diving". I couldn't agree more. ■



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Sun shines on **SCUBAFEST**

The weather gods finally smiled on Anglesey ScubaFest, blessing the event with blue skies and warm sunshine, and it proved a hit with divers and non-divers alike, as **MARK EVANS** reports

Photographs by MARK EVANS





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"Should be in every divers or outdoor enthusiasts kitbag." **SportDiver** Mark Evans - Editor



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PADI were on the beach and in the pool



Happy divers returning from a shore dive off Porth Dafarch



The host beach was a hive of activity around the gazebos of the dive industry



RIB shuttles ran out from Porth Dafarch

It had to happen. After previous years were blown out by strong winds and torrential rain, finally the spate of bad luck that has blighted the Anglesey ScubaFest was well and truly cast aside, in a blaze of glorious sunshine, clear blue skies and light winds. Keen divers had travelled to the diving festival in mid-August from all over the UK, including two young German girls who had made the trek up from Plymouth to take part, and because of the conditions, all the planned diving could take place for once. RIB shuttles by 'Diggs' of SBS Charters, on his new boat Interceptor, ran like clockwork from the host beach of Porth Dafarch several times a day, heading out to local wreck sites, while off the shore, eager divers were able to trial-dive shiny new kit from the likes of Apeks, Aqualung, Mares, Weezele, Zeagle and Atomic Aquatics, and on the Sunday there were sidemount trydives conducted by Garry Dallas.

But it wasn't all about the divers. Non-divers were well catered for, with PADI Pool Parties being held at the local leisure centre over the weekend - both the Saturday and the Sunday were well attended by adults and children all excited to try the underwater world for the first time. The big grins on surfacing said it all, and these got even bigger when they were given their goody bags containing PADI beanies, T-shirts and sunglasses!

There was plenty of activity on Porth Dafarch beach as well, with BSAC Beachcomber events running in and among the general holidaymakers enjoying the warm weather. There were many groups of kayakers and coasteering enthusiasts venturing out from the beach as well, which all helped create a bustling atmosphere along the 'strip' of manufacturer and training agency gazebos.

The banter and chatter continued once proceedings moved back to the Anglesey Outdoor Centre, where live music was provided by local bands on the Friday and Saturday evenings, and divers and non-divers gathered to sup the odd beverage or two from the Paddler's Rest bar and restaurant, handily located right on-site.

The whole aim of the ScubaFest events is to encourage more divers to venture into UK coastal waters, as well as attract an entirely new audience of non-divers to the sport, and the Anglesey ScubaFest did just that. Despite the vis being pretty lousy, all the divers I spoke to had thoroughly enjoyed their time on and under the water, and likewise, the PADI Pool Party attendees were equally enamoured with their brief introduction to the watery realm. Even the NUPG splash-in (see next page) had plenty of entrants!. Roll on next year's ScubaFests! ■

NUPG Annual Splash-In and Print Competition 2015

Every summer since 2000, when the Northern Underwater Photography Group (NUPG) was founded, they have organised a one-day underwater photography competition which takes place anywhere in North Wales. Anglesey has, traditionally, been the focal point for the judging of the event, and for the third year running, the society has synchronised the event to coincide with the Anglesey ScubaFest. It features a splash-in competition, where competitors have to take images on the day, in the sea, and only in marine waters around the North Wales coastline. In the past, the competition has been restricted to NUPG members only, but since the link-up with ScubaFest, the event is open to all-comers and is now one of the best-attended splash-ins in the country.

Everyone has their own idea of where they think they can get the best pictures. Some head out on boats, others shore dive, but this year, everyone had particularly difficult conditions to deal with. While the sun shone overhead, making it a lovely day to be out and about, underneath the surface, the visibility was unforgiving for photographers at less than one metre, and many of the dives also had some annoying and vomit-inducing surge. Each participant can choose to enter images into five categories: System Wide Angle; System Macro; Compact Wide Angle; Compact Macro and the Spirit of ScubaFest. Once the dives are completed, the divers then all rush to the ScubaFest venue at the Anglesey Outdoor Centre, where the images have to be handed in by 7.30pm, in time to be considered in the competition. The images that are submitted are not allowed to be cropped and only basic, whole-image editing is allowed. The images have to be taken on the day and in order to discourage anyone from using an image taken earlier, a registration sheet is emailed out the evening before, and this has to be the first image on the memory card. On top of the splash-in competition, there is also a print competition, with four categories to enter: Overseas Wide Angle; Overseas Macro; British Wide Angle and British Macro. Each image has to have been taken within the last 12 months by NUPG members. These are displayed around the outside of the room for all those attending, whether they took part or not, to vote for their favourite images, two from each category. It was great to see so many lovely shots in each category, making it a tough choice for every vote. It was generally felt among the NUPG members that this year's entrants were of a particularly high standard.

The event was sponsored by ten different companies from within the diving and underwater photography industry. This meant that each category winner, from both the splash-in and print competitions, got a trophy to take home and keep. Apeks, Frogfish Photography and Mares were on hand to give out their awards, while Mark Evans, Sport Diver editor, was on hand to present the rest. Many of the votes were extremely close, with only one vote in it and for three categories, a vote-off was required to decide the winners, and in another two cases, the runner-up. The four splash-in category winners were then voted for to decide the overall winner of the 2015 splash-in. The overall winner won a trophy to keep, but more importantly, they also collected the highly coveted NUPG Splash-In trophy (an underwater photographer made out of nuts and bolts) to keep until next year.

Caroline Robertson-Brown's overall winning shot



THE WINNERS

Splash-In

System Wide Angle (sponsored by Frogfish Photography): Winner - Caroline Robertson-Brown with an image of the blue sky looking up through some seaweed at McKenzie Pier; Runner-up - Nick Robertson-Brown with a split shot of his dog Paddy swimming through the seaweed, also at McKenzie Pier.

System Macro (sponsored by Apeks): Winner - Caroline Robertson-Brown with a shot of three shannies taken at Porth Dafarch; Runner-up - Jim Garland with a portrait shot of a lobster and John Spencer with a cute shot of a blenny.

Compact Camera Wide Angle (sponsored by Nauticam UK): Winner - Alex Tasker with a split shot, with a gull flying overhead; Runner-up - Nick Robertson-Brown with a shot of Star Wars characters fighting on a sandy seabed!

Compact Camera Macro (sponsored by DiveLife): Winner - Alex Tasker with a detailed shot of an anemone; Runner-up - Marc Hubble with a difficult shot of a tiny crab hanging upside down on seaweed.

Spirit of ScubaFest (sponsored by Scubaverse): Winner - Roz Lunn with an image of a boy playing on an inflatable shark; Runner-up - Roz Lunn with an image of a horse on the beach with a boat full of divers in the background.

Overall Winner (sponsored by Mares): Winner - Caroline Robertson-Brown with the image of the shannies.

Print Competition

Overseas Wide Angle (sponsored by Equator Diving): Winner - Caroline Robertson-Brown with a split shot of a swimming pig from Exuma in The Bahamas; Runner-up - John Spencer with an evocative shot of a school of fish under a pier.

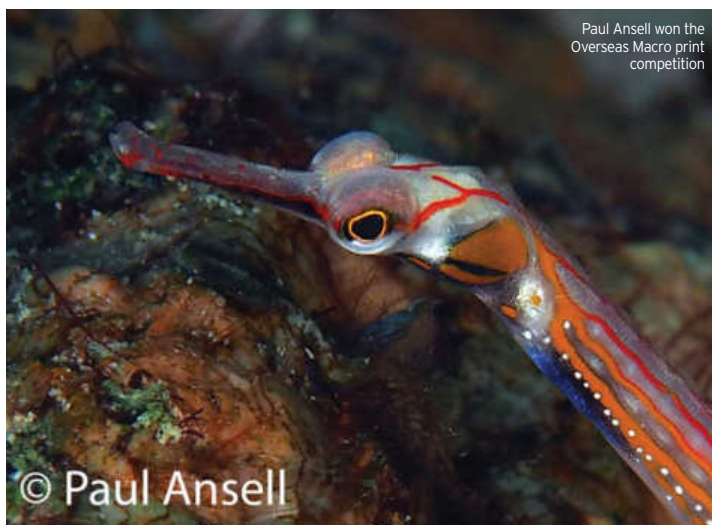
Overseas Macro (sponsored by Dive Quest): Winner - Paul Ansell with a lovely portrait of a colourful pipefish; Runner-up - Nick Robertson-Brown with a black background portrait of a leafy sea-dragon taken in South Australia and John Spencer with a tiny blenny on coral taken from above.

British Wide Angle (sponsored by INON UK): Winner - Caroline Robertson-Brown with a shot of a seal taken in the Farne Islands; Runner-up - Paul Kay with a shot of colourful brittle stars.

British Macro (sponsored by Frogborn): Winner - Paul Kay with a bokeh (blurred) shot of an edible crab; Runner-up - Sue Spencer with a shot of an anemone with brittle stars.

Once again the event was very well attended, with a high standard of images on display (especially given the splash-in conditions). Caroline, who is the NUPG secretary, was overwhelmed at doing so well on the night. "The NUPG splash-in trophy is something I have wanted to win since joining the NUPG eight years ago. I am extremely proud to have now done so and cannot wait to get my name engraved on the trophy alongside some of our society's previous great underwater photographers"

Paul Ansell won the Overseas Macro print competition



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wakatobi

uncovered

THE BEACH MAKERS

A closer look at one of the most-valuable, but oft-overlooked, fish on the reef

Photographs by Walt Stearns

Of the thousands of species of marine life you may encounter at Wakatobi, none are more ubiquitous than the parrotfish. In fact, these relatives of the wrasse are among the most-abundant and widespread species found on tropical reefs around the world. And that's a good thing, because without parrotfish, the very health of the reef would be in jeopardy, and we humans might not be able to enjoy a walk on the beach. But we're getting ahead of

ourselves. Before delving into the benefits these fish provide the environment, let's first learn a bit more about these often-overlooked but fascinating creatures. Because of these fish's propensity for changing coloration, shape and sex over the course of their lives, it was once thought that there were more than 300 species of parrotfish. Scientists now put the number closer to 90. In Wakatobi waters, you can find up to 35 members of the parrotfish menagerie swimming about the upper portions of the reef, or venturing into the seagrass beds closer

to shore. Parrotfish are easily recognised by their distinctive beak-like mouths, with tightly-packed teeth growing outside the jawbone. These teeth are the scrapers, which are used to gnaw on coral and rocks, either to remove algae or to actually loosen chunks of the coral itself. Deeper inside the parrotfish's throat, a different set of molar-like teeth are used to pulverise ingested chunks of coral and extract embedded algae and polyps. All this chewing creates a lot of wear and tear on the dental work, so parrotfish are constantly re-growing their teeth. Parrotfish can't actually digest the pulverised coral they create, and once the

living organisms are extracted from the slurry, the remaining inorganic material is dumped overboard. Most anyone who has snorkelled or dived on a tropical coral reef has witnessed the periodic discharges of parrotfish. What they are actually seeing is the beginnings of a beach. The crushed coral generated by parrotfish is one of the primary components of beach sand in many parts of the world, including Wakatobi. So yes, when you are curling your toes in the sand, you are technically

standing on parrotfish poop. The average-sized parrotfish produces around 280 grams of waste per day, which works out to about 100kg of sand per year, per fish. A beautiful beach isn't actually the most-valuable result of the parrotfish diet. In addition to washing ashore, much of the sand parrotfish produce settles into the shallows to provide a substrate for burrowing animals. And even more important is the removal of algae from the reefs. Various studies have shown that the presence of parrotfish is one of the single most important contributors to the overall health of a coral reef. In many areas of the world, these fish are harvested for



food, causing local populations to plummet. Fortunately, most species of parrotfish are not threatened with extinction on a worldwide level, and they are in plentiful supply in Wakatobi, thanks to the protected status of the reefs. You are likely to encounter numerous species of parrotfish at Wakatobi, ranging from 30cm to 120cm in length, with the largest being the bumphead and the bicour. They often graze in schools, and if you stop and listen, you can actually hear them grinding away at the corals. Near sunset, you may see these fish begin to scatter, each headed off in search of a sheltering section of the reef, where they



can secrete their signature cocoons. It takes a parrotfish about a half hour to create the mucous bubble that becomes their bedchamber for the night. It's thought that this membrane helps to mask the parrotfish's scent and protect it from predators. Whatever the purpose, a cocooned parrotfish makes for an interesting snapshot during a night dive. With so many exotic and unusual creatures awaiting discovery in Wakatobi waters, it would be easy to swim right by a parrotfish without giving it a second glance. Take a closer look, however, and you may discover there's a bit more to the routine comings and goings of these fish than you might at first imagine. ■





EAT SLEEP DIVE REPEAT

Over the years, [JEREMY CUFF](#) and his family have visited Egypt on a number of occasions. This time, they were looking for some 'back to nature' simplicity, which led them to just north of El Quseir and the laidback Roots Red Sea

Photographs by JEREMY & AMANDA CUFF/WWW.JA-UNIVERSE.COM

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In recent times, we found ourselves with a craving for some simplicity in our lives, as we juggled a myriad of responsibilities of the sort that many of us will be all too familiar with. So, for our Easter holiday, we looked for a place that would give us an interlude from all those complexities and allow us to relax, do what we enjoy, and to recharge our batteries in a simple and straightforward environment. To tick our boxes, we wanted a place with good weather where we could get up, eat, go diving, eat, watch the sun go down and repeat the following day - that sort of thing.

Our research for that 'back to simplicity' place soon led us to Roots Red Sea. We'd had a Red Sea dive camp on our 'to do list' for some time and in terms of Roots specifically, we'd heard good things about it from a couple of diving friends, it had good online reviews and could cater for our 12-year-old son Zac, who is now qualified as a PADI Junior Open Water Diver and keen to participate in the dives. We duly made the booking and it was something we really looked forward to as the date approached.

Roots Red Sea is located just north of the town of El Quesir. There are two easy ways of getting there, either by flying into Marsa Alam to the south or Hurghada to the north; either way, it's a transfer up or down the desert coast road. Flight schedules meant that we chose Hurghada as our entry and exit points into Egypt, from where it's a one-and-a-half hour drive south, past Safage to a remote spot a few kilometres north of El Quseir.

Our evening arrival into Egypt meant that we weren't able to see the stark and spectacular desert scenery straightaway - that would have to wait until the morning. It was nearly midnight when we arrived and it was nice that the Roots team had kept some food back for us so that we could go to bed on a full stomach.

We awoke to the expected (and hoped for) Egyptian weather of bright, warm sunshine and enjoyed taking in the vista that we were initially denied due to our night time arrival. It's a lovely setting, where the desert meets the sea, the dark blue waters of the Red Sea beckoning us to go diving just over the road at Abu Sauatir beach, where Roots have an area for kitting up, washing and drying gear and also a beachside cafe.

"Heading down the south wall, we encountered impressive schools of fusiliers and a very active bommie at 18m alive with tiny baitfish, crinoids, a myriad of corals and a very photogenic red-skirted anemone with attendant clownfish"

As we were 'taking root' for ten days, there was no great hurry to rush into the water so we used the first morning to unpack, have a leisurely breakfast, meet some of the staff, take our kit to the dive centre, build the underwater camera rigs and talk to the dive team about some of the diving options. Weather permitting (or perhaps wind permitting), the diving choices are quite wide - from shore diving (including night dives) on the house reef, half-day shore-diving trips to selected sites up and down the coast (usually in minibuses with the kit following along in pick-ups), boat diving on zodiacs and small boats from El Quseir, and day trips to further flung sites such as Abu Kufan and the Red Sea favourite of Elphinstone.

As we were diving with Zac, we decided that most of our diving would be at local sites rather than some of the more-distant 'advanced' sites such as Elphinstone (though I did do a day trip to Abu Kufan - more on that later). As is the norm at Roots, we started with a check-out dive at the Abu Sauatir 'house reef' to get ourselves into the swing of things.

The house reef is really quite good, with lots of reef inhabitants and interesting underwater topography to keep divers happy. You can head either north or south along the reef wall, though it's also worth checking out the sloping sandy expanse in between the north and south walls which can yield some interesting sightings such as flounder, pipefish and even sea moths (though we weren't fortunate enough to see the latter), as well as a statue that has been somehow sunk there for the benefit of divers - Zac was especially intrigued by this unexpected 'find'.

We noticed that there were lots of 'stinging things' on the house reef, with scorpionfish aplenty and a pair of their more-cryptic and deadly relatives, the stonefish. Heading down the south wall, we encountered impressive schools of fusiliers and a very active bommie at 18m alive with tiny baitfish, crinoids, a myriad of corals and a very photogenic red-skirted anemone with attendant clownfish.



Diver approaching a school of glassfish

Beyond the diving

Though the main reason for visiting Roots will be diving, they also offer other experiences and excursions that are worth considering, such as quad biking, camel treks, desert safaris, and trips to the Nile Valley or even Cairo.

We chose to visit the ancient and historic city of Luxor, which is located on the Nile. To get there, the Roots team organised a driver to pick us up early for the drive due west across the desert. Though a long day, we were able to take in the Temple of Karnak, a papyrus factory and gallery, a drive past the Temple of Luxor, the Valley of the Kings, an alabaster factory, Quenn Hatchepsut's Temple, the Colossi of Memnon and a short boat trip on the Nile itself to a secluded plantation for a fruit and drink stop.



Though the evening buffets, stargazing opportunities, the attraction of the camp 'chill out zone' (with a choice of shisha flavours and a wood-burner to pull you closer in the evening cool) and the temptation of early nights are a deterrent to getting in the water after dark, it's worth it if you do. By night diving at Abu Sauatir, you can expect some interesting finds, including octopus, squid, and perhaps even Spanish dancers, though like the sea moths in the day, they avoided giving us an encounter.

Going further afield from the house reef is a must. There's a good choice of diving to be enjoyed, though the prevailing weather can affect the plans some days. During our visit, we had a few windy days that made some sites 'off limits', but there's always somewhere good to go.

Of the shore dives, we headed to sites both north and south of Roots. Most have reasonably straightforward entry points, with the Roots dive crew being very good at assisting anyone who's a bit unsteady.

Especially worthy of mention were El Makluf to the north, where we enjoyed splendid Red Sea reef scenery in easy conditions (i.e. little current), which yielded crocodilefish, scorpionfish, nudibranchs, lizardfish and moray eels among the sightings. To the south, we visited the sheltered Serib Kebir on a couple of occasions when other sites were blown out. Here, there's a resident school of barracuda, approachable lionfish,

Gearing-up for a dive



Lionfish are a common Red Sea sight



and interesting reef scenes, including pinnacles, caves, gullies and swim-throughs.

At El Quseir, there's a dilapidated stone jetty that is used as the departure point for the some of the local sites that can't be shore dived. From here, locally run boats take divers to a number of sites in the vicinity of the town. The Rock is particularly popular, which is El Quseir's version of Anemone City. Here at around 18m, divers can marvel at an incredible concentration of anemones, which in turn give home to large numbers of the iconic clownfish. Nearby is the Fandira Wreckage site, a pleasant reef slope that gave us a nice turtle encounter.

Though very rare, dugongs are still known to inhabit the area, especially to the south of El Quseir, and are very occasionally sighted. As eternal optimists, we hoped for an encounter with these 'sea grass hoovers', especially at the Oma Sukan site, which offered the most promise with a flat expanse of sea grass beds next to a shallow reef. On occasion, I would swim away from the reef to look for pipefish, flounder and stingrays while keeping a watchful eye for something more 'special'.

Dolphins can often be sighted around El Quseir, and while on one of the morning dives from El Quseir we encountered a small pod heading north. The captain set off to intercept them, allowing Zac and a couple of others to jump in and watch them pass underneath. They were able to do this several times, an experience that Zac really enjoyed.

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As well as the 'stinging things' on the house reef, we also noticed an abundance of scorpionfish at most sites, including a really unusual specimen that Zac spotted, which looked more like a frogfish in colouration.

At around the mid-point of our trip, Amanda and Zac fancied a 'chill out day' at the camp, so I booked a full-day boat dive trip to one of the further flung and isolated reef systems. I chose to visit Abu Kufan, which is best accessed by larger day boats from Safaga. Abu Kufan is an impressive reef, and very similar to the renowned Elphinstone to the south.

At Abu Kufan, it's possible to encounter hammerheads, which we attempted to see by going deep on the first dive, but they eluded us. Other pelagics are also possible here, but it's also very enjoyable just cruising along the wall, which is festooned with colourful corals, sponges and other reef growth. In this respect, there are some very impressive gorgonians and proliferations of soft coral.

Near the end of the trip, on Easter Sunday, the Roots team organised an 'Underwater Easter Egg Hunt', where four small plastic eggs were placed on the house reef within the first 10m of water, with no other clues as to their whereabouts. It was a first for all of us, with Zac super-determined to find one of the eggs, the retrieval of which won a small prize.

You could go north or south; it was up to you. I decided to head north and found some new areas to explore, including some caves and cuts in the reef, with sightings including a crocodilefish, a burly looking scorpionfish, blue-spotted rays and a huge moray eel, but no Easter eggs. To cover all bases, Amanda and Zac headed south in their quest for an egg.

After nearly an hour, and with no Easter egg in sight, I decided to head back to shore to see how Amanda and Zac had fared, expecting them to be back from the dive. To my surprise, they were still on the dive, so I ditched my kit and waited for their return, expecting them to surface

empty-handed. When they reappeared, I suspected something, as Zac's disappointment somehow didn't seem genuine. Suddenly, Zac held out an Easter egg. He'd been successful, and won some choc for his efforts!

As we got talking to the staff and some of the visiting divers, we learned that quite a few guests were repeat customers and that many of the staff had worked there for some time, which is always a good sign.

Though I've tended to talk about the diving in general, it must be said that the Roots team were very good with Zac. He was very well looked after on the dives and enjoyed life at the camp, with the staff enjoying having kids around, where regular pranks such as the strategic placement of a plastic snake caused much amusement during our stay.

Overall, we very much enjoyed Roots Red Sea. We could see why they generated repeat bookings and can imagine returning again ourselves. We had indeed got up, ate, dived, ate, watched the sun go down, slept and repeated the same. It had been good. ■

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW EL QUSEIR, EGYPT



HOW TO GET THERE

To reach El Quseir, there are two choices - either flying into Hurgada to the north or Marsa Alam to the south. From these entry points, it's a minibus journey up or down the desert coast road to reach Roots Red Sea.

WHEN TO VISIT

We visited in spring, when the weather is warm during the days and pleasantly cool in the evenings. If travelling in the winter months, the air and water temperatures can be considerably cooler. Also, the legendary Red Sea winds can affect or disrupt visits to certain dive sites.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Visas are required by British citizens and can be

obtained upon entry into Egypt, although it's worth checking with tour operators in case anything has changed, and for the current cost.

CURRENCY

Egyptian Pound (£1 = EGP12).

WHERE TO EAT AND MEET

The Roots Red Sea food is tasty and plentiful, and the chill-out area is a great place to socialise on an evening.

VERDICT

Roots Red Sea offers a relaxed, chilled out location from which to dive as much as you want, or kickback for the day - the perfect tonic for a hectic lifestyle, and it is a great place for kids to have fun too.

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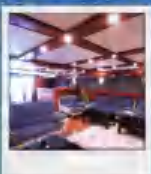
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STAR LETTER

Holy sea cow!

Hello Sport Diver,
My name is Alan Tomkins, PADI diver of more than 20 years! I've loved diving ever since I took those first hallowed breaths underwater in the early 1990s - in a swimming pool in Bognor in case you were wondering! The first ten years or so of my 'diving life' were restricted to UK diving, which was predominantly quarries from late autumn to early spring, and various spots along the South Coast of the UK during the warmer months. Once I got a bit older and had a bit more disposable cash I started going a little further afield and have, in the last decade or so, been lucky enough to holiday once a year in a wide variety of destinations. Five of these trips have been to the Red Sea (it's just so good and so affordable), and the best of these was just a few weeks ago. Now, I've done the Thistlegorm and I've done Elphinstone and I've dived with dolphins and sharks... but this time round I shared the water with the most exquisite and ridiculous creature I have ever seen - the dugong. For 90 minutes, I hovered with one of these underwater cows as he munched sea grass, not giving a jot about me. I'm sure some people out there will think I'm mad, but it was the best dive experience I have ever had!

Alan Tomkins, via email



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KUBI love

Hi guys, please believe me when I say that I am not just writing to you in the hope of getting star letter and winning a Miflex hose or set of KUBI gloves, but... I have just started using KUBIs after years of wearing wet gloves on drysuit dives and MY GOODNESS. To say I am converted would be an understatement. All divers should be wearing these things! So simple and so effective, it actually boggles the mind. I did a 72 minute dive the other day in 9 degrees C water and when I came out my hands were warm as you like. My buddies not so much - cue plenty of banter. Anyways, thought I'd send in a quick note to share the love. It's a happy coincidence that you offer KUBIs to star letter winners, honestly. On a completely unrelated note, I was thinking about maybe picking up a spare pair...

Ben Burns, via email

Bin it, don't sling it!

I have just come back from a two-week break in the Maldives. It was a truly sensational experience and the diving was easily the best I have ever done. All in all, it really was the trip of a lifetime - the island nation is paradise on earth! But I did see one thing that made my heart sink... a fellow diver throwing litter overboard during a daytrip. As divers, I think we're generally a pretty conscientious bunch, mindful of the fact that the environment we visit is not our own and that our actions can have significant impacts upon it. So you can imagine my dismay when a fellow guest (snorkeller rather than diver, though that shouldn't matter) finishes a bottle of water and throws it over the side! Words were had. Just a gentle reminder that we're all in the same boat here and need to fight such behaviour together!

Sara Keilly, via email

Malta - what a gem!

Malta - what a gem! I've just come back from a five-day trip to this Mediterranean isle and I have to say I was blown away by the experience. I know the Med gets a tough time for being overfished and lacking action, but there wasn't a single dive during this trip that I got bored, whether on Malta itself or the neighbouring island of Gozo. Topographically varied and with visibility to die for, I was in heaven. And then there are the wrecks! I think the Maltese authorities have really got their heads screwed on with this one - so many of the wrecks around the coastline are artificial and have been purposefully sunk for divers, and they are great fun. Not only do they offer something to look at on dives, but they offer a home for those fish that everyone says have disappeared. Safe to say I'll be going back.

Aaron Bell, via email



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Divers are surrounded by sharks under the boat

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NICK AND CAROLINE ROBERTSON-BROWN head to the Caribbean island of Cuba and are overwhelmed by the quality of big animal encounters

Photographs by **NICK AND CAROLINE ROBERTSON-BROWN/FROGFISH PHOTOGRAPHY**

For many years, we have desperately wanted to travel to Cuba, and this urge has only got greater as the fear of this island changing forever gets ever more real. So when the opportunity to fulfil this dream arrived, we leapt at our first chance to travel to this unique and fabulous country during the run-up to Christmas. The Scuba Place organised a liveboard trip to Jardines de la Reina, famed for its shark encounters, and invited us to put a small group of photographers together to head out there to photograph the silky and Caribbean reef sharks.

Fewer than 800 divers per year are allowed to make the journey to dive the marine park at Jardines de la Reina. With this restriction, the US embargo, and the 12 hours of travelling (just from Havana), we knew we would be diving Caribbean sites that would be at their very best. We started our journey by flying from Manchester to Havana via Paris. Alas, on the outward leg of the journey, the flight was delayed so we only had a few hours to sleep in the five-star hotel in Havana, before moving on again. A coach picked us up at 4.30am to continue by road along the

long and narrow island, situated just 240 miles south of Key West in the Caribbean Sea. The roads are slow going, with the traffic consisting of horse and carts and vintage American and Russian cars, but our six-hour ride through Cuba gave us an insight into the country. Our destination was a remote archipelago, 100 miles offshore to the south. We transferred onto the boat that was to be home for the next seven days, MY Georgiana, and struck out on a six-hour boat ride to reach Jardines de la Reina (Gardens of the Queen). With the sun shining and the sea calm, it was difficult to imagine the cold and tired skies we had left behind, just the day before. On our arrival at the floating resort, we started to prepare our dive gear, which would be kept on a small skiff used for the diving day. Then it was time to eat, take a quick tour of the mangroves, assemble our camera rigs and start to get excited about the diving the following day.

Our liveboard was moored among the mangrove islands, the dive sites just a short, exhilarating boat ride away. Our first dive was to be a check dive on a shallow reef, to make sure everyone's kit was working and we were all happy with our weighting and the diving conditions. We



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were delighted at both the pristine condition of the reef, the abundance of life on it and the amazing 30-metre visibility that greeted us. But this dive was just the warm-up for the main event. After a surface interval on our mother boat, we were back in the skiff with our tanks refilled, and heading out for our first shark dive. Gustavo, our lead dive guide, told us he would take us on a tour of the reef, and then at the end of the dive, we would encounter a shiver of silky sharks around the boat. The boat crew attract the silkies by putting a fish head (left over from dinner) in a metal box and hanging it over the stern of the boat. The smell drifts out into the sea and attracts the sharks. By the time we rolled backwards into the warm, clear water, a handful of silky sharks had already gathered to greet us. Once in the water, the idea of leaving these elegant creatures to go on a reef dive just seemed absurd, and so we stayed at 5m, watching more and more sharks gather and waited for them to get closer to our cameras. It was wonderful to see these sleek and graceful sharks up so close. As there were only ten divers in the water, including our guide, there was plenty of room to find your own space and watch the show - and with no time limits on the dive. Many of us spent more 70 minutes being enthralled as the sharks became more familiar with us, edging ever closer. Eventually, the thought of lunch made us all climb back onto the boat. After a post-food snooze we were back on the skiff and getting ready for another reef dive. Here, even without any bait in the water, plenty of Caribbean reef sharks cruised the reef, and hung with us on our tour. It was clear from our first day of diving that this was going to be a special trip.

The staff on the boat were excellent all round. Having had a hot shower and starting to download the day's images, there is nothing quite like being offered a complimentary cocktail and a hot slice of pizza. The package also includes free soft drinks, beer and a bottle of rum to share among the group each day! As the sun went down, we reviewed our images, picked out our favourite shark shots from the day and talked about how we could do better the following day...

The plan for our second day of diving was similar to the first. We started with a silky shark dive, which provided another thrilling experience. During our short surface interval back on the main boat, a crocodile swam over. It was close enough for a few of us to dangle our cameras over the edge and get a few shots! On the following dive we took the bait box down with us to attract reef sharks. Gustavo carried the box and found a suitable spot at about 18m to place it. Attractive corals and sponges covered the reef, with sharks soon cruising around our small group of divers. Reef sharks are not shy and will get very close, but are not at all threatening. The time whizzed by, and soon it was time to head up for our safety stop. As Gustavo picked up the bait box and headed for shallower water, the sharks followed suit, and so we got a special treat: loads of time to off-gas and to photograph the reef sharks in shallow blue water.

On day three, in between our first and second shark dives, we decided it was time to go searching for Niño (which means Child) among the mangroves. A few of us went out in the skiff and Gustavo called out for the saltwater crocodile. Niño has been fed chicken by the boat staff since he was very young, but even so, we were amazed that, on hearing his name, out he swam, a three-metre crocodile, just at the edge of the mangroves. The area is very shallow and silty, so those of us who decided to get in the water had to be careful on a number of fronts. Although Niño gets fed chicken, he is still a wild animal. We moved slowly and carefully, so as not to spook him or disturb too much silt. We managed to get in close for a few shots, and then he decided he'd had enough and slithered back into the impenetrable mangrove root system. It was an amazing experience. The rest of the day's diving was also pretty amazing, with plenty more shark encounters. The images from the trip were really starting to fill up disk space!

Days four and five offered yet more chances to get up close to a wild



Happy divers pre-dive



The sharks come in close - perfect for photographers...



...as this shot demonstrates

"By the time we rolled backwards into the warm, clear water, a handful of silky sharks had already gathered to greet us"

The business end of a saltwater croc



El Nino is an impressive sight



"We were amazed that, on hearing his name, out he swam, a three-metre crocodile, just at the edge of the mangroves"

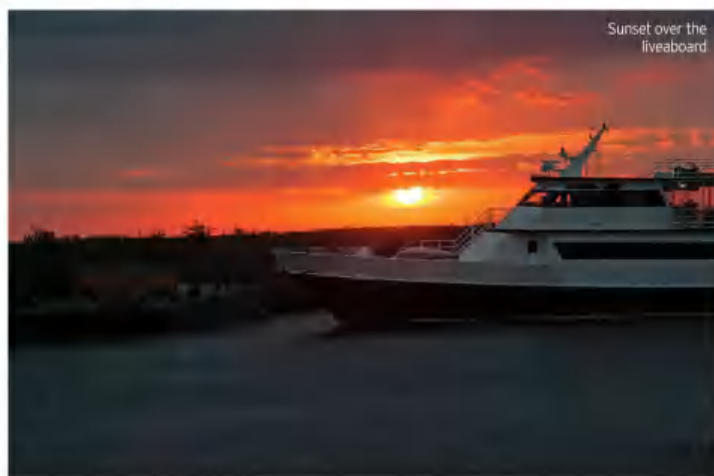
crocodile, and there were plenty more sharks and pristine reefs. On several of the dives there was a giant grouper keen to retrieve what was in the box, and on the final reef dive we encountered a Goliath grouper that left those who had chosen to use their macro lenses looking pretty sick!

All too soon it was time to rinse down, dry out and pack away all the kit. We have been privileged to have dived numerous dive sites all around the world and still we both agree that these five days of diving were the best we have ever experienced. We love diving with big animals, especially sharks, and this trip had given us three dives a day to do what we love best - and we had multiple shark encounters on every single dive. The water was clear and warm (not a luxury we have had recently), and the food, drinks and topside experience, with a lovely group of underwater photographers, topped off the trip perfectly.

Back in Havana, sitting down in our hotel bar for a well-deserved mojito, we spotted Diego Maradona (and a heavy entourage). We decided to stay up for a few more cocktails to see if we could gain revenge for the 'Hand of God' by annoying him with our cameras. With two nights to experience the city, we took a chauffeured tour in a 1952, pink Chevy convertible and got the chance to see Revolution Square. We wandered the crumbling streets, ate in vibrant restaurants filled with Cuban music, explored the markets on bike taxis, and photographed the amazing American jelly-mould cars that cruise about. Having bought cigars, rum and some local art, it was time to head home - exhausted but very happy.

The day after we returned to the UK, Barak Obama announced that the US would 'normalise' its ties with Cuba. For better or for worse, this is going to mean huge changes for this wonderful country and its people. We are delighted we made it just in time to see Cuba as it was, but we are also looking forward to going back to see what it might become. Fingers crossed we will still find a pristine marine environment with a wide-angle lens-full of sharks, and a slightly bigger crocodile! ■

Sunset over the liveaboard



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

CUBA



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HOW TO GET THERE

We flew Air France, via Paris, to Havana. It was then a lengthy coach journey to reach our liveaboard departure point. It was another five hours by sea to reach Jardine de la Reina, where we moored for the week.

WHEN TO VISIT

The Gardens of the Queen are accessible all year round, with the best conditions from November to April. Avoid peak hurricane season in August and September.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

You need to get a tourist card before you travel. You also need to have at least six months left on your passport. There is a departure tax of 25CUCs.

CURRENCY


Cuban Convertible Peso (£1 = 1.5 CUC). You cannot get these until you are in Cuba, where you can use an ATM in Havana or change money at the airport or at your hotel. Take cash with you.

WHERE TO EAT AND MEET

The food on our boat was varied and excellent. In Havana, get out to visit local bars for a mojito, listen to live music and do some salsa dancing.

VERDICT

A destination like no other, and soon to change, so go soon to see it before the huge changes that are surely coming. This is a five-star trip.



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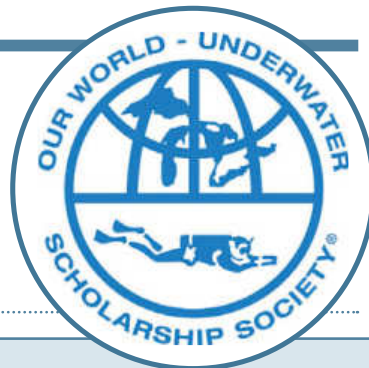
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SERIOUS FUN WITH FULLFACE MASKS

Text by **DANNY COPELAND**



“Diver One to Surface...Diver One to Surface” I muttered as I fumbled for the comms button on the outside of my mask. A few silent seconds went by while I hovered in the murk, before a tinny but familiar voice sounded out from somewhere around my head. “Go ahead Diver One” Richard politely requested. I took another breath before making my announcement. “I have reached bottom... 29.9999m... over.” Another few seconds of silence. “Surface to Diver One... any chance you could be more accurate, please? Over.” My latest Scholarship adventure saw me return to the familiar and slightly less-tropical shores of the British Isles. I was due to jump on a ten-day HSE Scuba course, conducted in and around Cardiff and Bristol by Neil Brock and the gang at Bristol Channel Diving Services. The idea of spending ten days in a classroom and diving in the murky quarries of southwest England may not sound overly inviting to some people, especially given my previous month of tropical diving in the Red Sea. Not me, though. I was equally pumped and anxious to get going with what was set to be an intensive few weeks. “Wait, hold up Danny. What on earth is HSE Scuba? Also, why is this such a big deal to you?” I hear you ask. Well, dear reader, let me explain. In short, completing the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) Scuba course is a legal requirement for anyone that wants a job within UK waters, or abroad with a UK-based company, where scuba diving is a requirement to complete a particular job. So this encompasses things like working on offshore rigs, underwater construction work and archaeological sites. While I’m not so interested in any of those fields, the qualification also encompasses underwater work in the science and media industries, such as being an assistant or safety diver for an underwater camera operator on a film shoot. Given that I’m a firm believer in the power of photo and film in conservation and the process of reconnecting people with their marine environments, this course was right up my street! In fact, completing the HSE Scuba has been high on my list of ‘must-do things during my Scholarship year’, and I have been quietly working towards all the pre-requisites even since I got back from New York. While there are several establishments in the UK that are certi-

fied to run HSE Scuba courses, each tends to tailor their course towards one of the various fields covered under the qualification, and Neil’s course is one of only a few that focuses around the world of media diving. What I was particularly excited about was that Neil’s course involves and draws upon the expertise of the legendary Richard Bull, who has a vast history of experience in the underwater media world. He has worked on a gazillion programmes, including BBC Blue Planet and Pacific Abyss to name a few. Suffice to say, I couldn’t wait to start! As with any course, the first day or so was dominated by important paperwork and necessary theory, but by day two, we were suiting up and getting ready to dive into all the new practical stuff. Firstly, the way scuba diving ‘at work’ is conducted is very different from your typical recreational dive. It’s far more systematic and regimented. Divers have their gear prepared and put onto them by people called ‘tenders’ (an unfamiliar experience, but one I could certainly get used to!). Meanwhile, the divers themselves must follow a specific dive plan not of their own making. Like a pawn, you are told when and what to do throughout the dive by the Dive Supervisor - essentially an omnipresent overlord that controls the whole operation in order to make sure the job gets done. ‘Omnipresent’ couldn’t be a more fitting description of the supervisor, as divers are all required to wear fullface masks with voice communications to the surface. Despite being a little apprehensive before my first dive, it wasn’t long before I fell in love with using the Guardian Fullface mask! Aside from being extremely practical and part of a safety requirement, being able to have a conversation with your team at the surface, and your fellow divers, is just so fantastically cool! A definite highlight of the course. Plus, avoiding the sharp happy-slap you get to the face when jumping into cold water was also a massive bonus. I’d like to thank Neil, Maggie, Richard, Adrian and the team from Bristol Channel Diving Services for helping me achieve a major objective of my Scholarship year. I haven’t the word-count to explain in detail all the cool things we got up to, but suffice to say that the team ran an awesome course. ■

Danny Copeland

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Hard at work gluing a drysuit together



Sally shows off a selection of RoHo suits



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FOCUS ON ROBIN HOOD WATERSPORTS

SPORT DIVER visits the all-encompassing premises of Yorkshire-based Robin Hood Watersports to get a feel for a company familiar to an ever-expanding number of divers both here in the UK and abroad

It all started in a garage. It was 1981 and the UK diving scene was still in its relative infancy. The scuba marketplace was niche, the pastime reserved for a small but burgeoning community. The coming decades would see the sport expand like few could have imagined - cheap international travel and the internet playing their part - but for the time being, as *The Empire Strikes Back* finished its run at the Box Office and Britain faced a deep, coal-black recession, recreational divers continued as they could: piecing together assorted kit and, in the case of two BSAC divers from Yorkshire, making their own.

Finding a decent drysuit had been a permanent problem for Barbara Findlow. The limited range of off-the-rack drysuits available were made for men - nothing fitted properly, and we all know what a difference a well-fitted suit makes. There was only one thing for it: Bob and Barbara Findlow would make their own.

And so Robin Hood Watersports (RoHo) was born.

It didn't take long before the business outgrew the garage, the company moving to its current site in 1983. In the ensuing years the site has been expanded significantly and now, as well as dive shop space, includes facilities for the company's other watersports and snowboarding businesses. But let's focus on the diving...



Cutting out a drysuit is a job best left to the RoHo pros



RoHo make suits for various services, including the fire brigade



The workmanship is second to none



Hard to believe this will become a drysuit

More than 30 years on from that first DIY drysuit and those very reasons that pushed the Findlows into their garage remain a key part of the company's ethos: RoHo is all about the personal touch. While Mr and Mrs Findlow senior no longer run the business, it remains within the family, son-and-daughter team Richard and Sally having been at the helm since 1990.

It's Sally who heads up the diving side of things (which accounts for about 25% of the business). During an afternoon discussing the business's history, its future and touring the premises, it's clear that Sally's passion for her company, what it represents and, most importantly, what it provides its customers remains undimmed, even after all these years. Central to everything is the customer - and, while the cynical might point to the fact that any savvy business owner looks after their customers to reap the long-term benefits of retention, you can't help but feel there is more to it than that where Sally and RoHo are concerned.

Take the 'made to measure' offer. RoHo offers a range of standard drysuit sizes, but if none of the off-the-rack stuff is quite right you can opt for a made-to-measure suit at no extra cost - that perfect fit, that very thing that Barbara was searching for in 1981, is just as important today and RoHo don't feel that divers should have to pay extra for that privilege.

Quality, naturally, is also hugely important. With all suits made onsite, quality control is in RoHo's own hands - meeting the seamstresses and witnessing the attention to detail that goes into each individual suit made quite an impression. And that attention to detail is clearly paying dividends - one of the company's clients is the Fire Brigade, a solid nod to RoHo's quality if ever there was one. But perhaps the most significant affirmation of the toughness and durability of RoHo's suits is that a sewer repairs company uses them: "They're rough, tough and stand the test of time."

Commercial sales account for about half of all business, with other high-

profile clients such as the RSPCA also purchasing from RoHo. But it is the individual - that crowd of others who make up the remaining 50% of sales - who is king. With suits priced between £550 and £1,200 (and each one totally customisable) there is something for everyone, and people regularly return for more. Sally prides herself on the company's customer loyalty, with many buyers returning 10-15 years after their initial drysuit purchase to ask for the same again.

Considering the importance RoHo places on the individual it perhaps comes as no surprise that the company is also a PADI 5* IDC centre (with its own pool) and has an affiliated dive club. Just as in the shop, the customer retention rate is significant - many divers who learned to dive with RoHo bring their children to learn at the same place they did, some of them a couple of decades later. That personal, family feel is evidentially something people continue to react to positively. Indeed, there is enough interest within the RoHo community (I think we can call it that), that the company fills between ten and 12 dive trips a year to places such as the Red Sea and the Maldives, as well as UK destinations such as the Farne Islands.

Robin Hood Watersports was a company built out of necessity and has, in the decades since, become synonymous with comfort and community. Its reach has widened significantly, but its core principles remain unchanged. While the clientele has expanded beyond these shores, the company remains unfalteringly British, with all materials and products (bar its boots) sourced and made in the UK.

Sally has been involved since the age of 11 and, with a staff roster that now totals 28, it would appear she and Richard are manoeuvring the company that mum and dad built in very healthy direction. But Bob knows that, he's still involved: chief cylinder tester. Things have come a long way since the garage... ■

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The seahorses of
SALADAN



ADRIAN STACEY goes for a truly mucky dive off Koh Lanta, Thailand, a site famous for its seahorses... and human waste!

Photographs by ADRIAN STACEY

Diving around the sites of Koh Lanta offers lovers of small critters plenty to get excited about. Creatures like nudibranchs, ornate ghost pipefish, frogfish, sea moths, peacock mantis shrimp, to name but a few, are all inhabitants of the reefs of Koh Haa, the Koh Bidas, Hin Daeng and Hin Muang. There is, however, one glaring exception: an animal that tops a lot of people's list of small creatures to see underwater and especially to photograph. I, of course, refer to the seahorse (*Hippocampus* – 'hippocampus' from the Ancient Greek hippos meaning 'horse' and 'kampos' meaning 'sea monster'). These strange creatures look like they belong on the pages of a fairytale book along with unicorns and dragons. In some they invoke the giddy response you would expect from a schoolgirl after her first kiss, others they leave slightly more underwhelmed. The response from a friend who saw one for the first time, a green spiny seahorse hiding in sea grass, was 'they are not very impressive, are they? I expected them to be bigger and more brightly coloured', much to the open-mouthed horror of another friend who falls into the aforementioned 'giddy schoolgirl' category of diver.

But whether you love them or are ambivalent about them, there is no denying they are very interesting animals, visually and in their behaviour and biology. They have a prehensile tail similar to that of a monkey and a head with distinctly equine features. They are a fish but are rather inept at swimming, choosing a vertical style rather than the tried-and-tested, and much more efficient, horizontal method. They have no scales; instead a thin layer of skin stretches over bony plates. They have no teeth or

stomach so they have to feed almost constantly on small crustaceans to stay alive. They are experts at camouflage and are able to change colour and their eyes can move independently of each other. They are also one of the few creatures where the male gives birth.

While there is a dearth of these funny fish on the regular dive site of Koh Lanta, they have turned up in a rather unusual place. Separating the islands of Koh Lanta Noi and Koh Lanta Yai is a stretch of water called a Klong (Thai for a river or channel). Along the banks of Koh Lanta Yai is the village of Saladan. Dozens of wooden buildings perched on stilts jut out over the water, providing accommodation for restaurants, bars, dive centres and guest houses. Unfortunately, many of the establishments along the banks of the Klong do not come equipped with Western-style plumbing, meaning most of the human waste generated ends up in the Klong. Almost at the end of this row of buildings, closest to where the Klong opens into an estuary then flows out to sea, is Hidden Depths Dive Centre. It is unclear why they one day decided to dive here; perhaps after cleaning the hull of their boat, or retrieving someone's personal effects that had fallen overboard, they were intrigued to see what was down there. What they found were seahorses. On one dive they counted more than ten specimens hiding in the healthy soft corals that have attached themselves to the supporting stilts and mooring posts. Sceptical of their claims I went to have a look for myself and to try and get some photos. Timing is everything when diving in the Klong. For obvious reasons, diving when the tide is going out is not a hygienic option. The best time is at high tide when the fresher sea water has been pumping

"Seahorses are experts at camouflage and are able to change colour and their eyes can move independently of each other. They are also one of the few creatures where the male gives birth"



Not all of the seahorses are brightly coloured



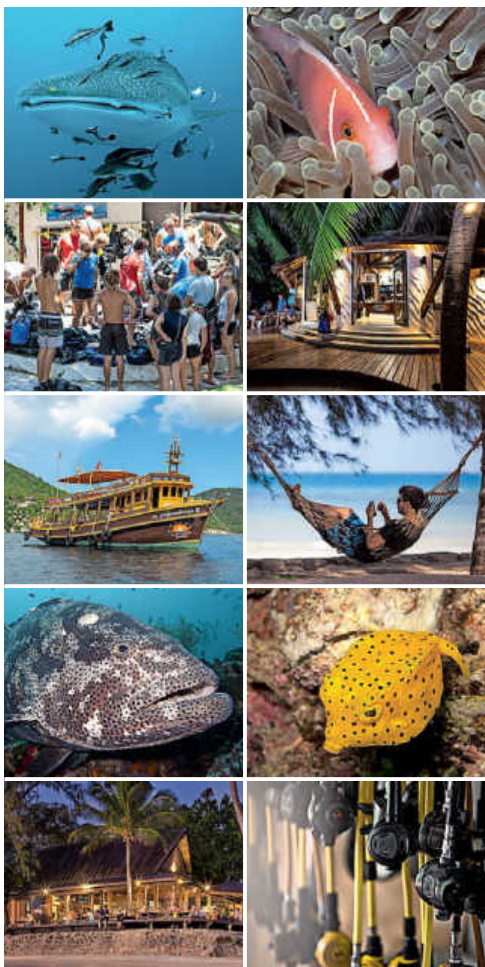
Head-on shots like this are incredibly difficult to capture

"After only a minute or so of searching we found our first seahorse, a multi-coloured tigertail"



This one matches what it is often swimming in!

through the channel for a few hours. The currents can get pretty strong when the tide is coming in or going out, so slack tide is the best time to dive. Visibility is generally not great (five metres is about average) although on some very rare days the water is crystal clear. My buddy and I descended the wooden steps from the dive centre expecting to see the owners pointing and laughing at us as we waded into the murky waters. Much to my amazement the first wooden post we came to was indeed covered in white soft coral and after only a minute or so of searching we found our first seahorse, a multi-coloured tigertail. Photographing these creatures can be tricky; one errant flick of a fin and a cloud of silt engulfs everything. Further along and still only at a depth of about 3m we found another one hiding among some purple whip coral. We continued on, keeping an ear and an eye out for any boats that might be coming in to moor and by the end of the dive we had found five seahorses, an octopus and a variety of crabs all at a maximum depth of about 6m. This is muck diving in the truest sense of the word but, after my third shower, I started to feel clean again and was able to reflect on an unexpectedly terrific seahorse dive. ■



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JUST ANOTHER DAY IN PARADISE

By MICHELLE T, STAFF INSTRUCTOR, AQUANAUTS GRENADA



Our morning briefing is underway and we have a busy day ahead. One boat is heading out with a group of students who are completing their Open Water training; the next takes a small group of experienced divers to our famous wreck Bianca C; and the third boat goes to the marine park for a guided snorkel tour. I am spending the morning in the pool teaching a rebreather course on the Hollis Explorer. This is an average day for me as an instructor at Aquanauts Grenada. I spend my days in the crystal-blue waters off the coast of the Spice Isle and my evenings enjoying the culture and charm of this Caribbean island.

Aquanauts has been my home since I left the UK a year ago and I am so glad I made the trip over the Pond. The diving is phenomenal. I have seen manta rays, frogfish and seahorses a plenty, giant roughtail stingrays and tiny nudibranchs. And that is just a standard Tuesday!

The environment lends itself to fantastic underwater photography, and this is the Specialty we teach most often after Enriched Air Diver (who could turn down free nitrox?). If you are already a diver and want to 'go

deeper for longer', then Grenada has the dive sites for you. Bianca C is the largest wreck in the Caribbean and it sits on the sand at just over 50m. Open circuit and rebreather technical courses can be added to your dive holiday, taught by instructors who have collectively over 50 years experience. Want to catch some dinner when you are out diving? No problem. Help us eradicate the invasive lionfish while providing some grub for you and your friends.

But don't feel like you must be a diver to enjoy our island. We have a beautiful marine park with the world's first underwater sculpture park that you can enjoy on a guided snorkel tour, or if you would like to try diving, one of our friendly instructors can introduce you to a world that we love and treasure.

Even those who don't want to get their toes wet can enjoy the lush green rainforests and visit the chocolate and rum factories to view the process of chocolate and rum making (and tasting!).

We hope to see you soon, so we can share our wonderful island and ocean with you. ■

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ADVANCED COMPOSITION: SIMULATING A PANORAMIC FEEL

Many thanks for your emails regarding last month's column on compositional panoramic crops. One reader mailed me to question the validity of changing the crop aspect ratio of his own compact camera into other alternatives. He thought that it might be cheating in some way. I'll address his concerns shortly, but to set the scene... True 'panoramics' are made in two ways. First by capturing ultra-wide underwater scenes using wide lenses, or secondly by stitching multiple images together later on the computer. I don't intend to discuss the latter. My aim this month is to discuss the cropping of an image in order to simulate a panoramic feel.

I personally don't have any problem at all in cropping my images in any way I like and in my opinion you shouldn't either. During the film era it was commonplace to expose a roll of film and live with the dimensional boundaries of our own particular camera, in those days, the norm being 35mm. We've come a long way since then and my own personal view - and the one I recommend to those I teach - is to make the most of any crop-ratio you

wish in order to enhance the strength of your image. In my own work I will crop an image into any aspect, which in my opinion enhances the impact. In last month's column I had a very wide subject (the reef) which needed to fit comfortably within the frame, so I chopped off both top and bottom to make the image stronger.

There are many reasons to crop an image into the panoramic format. The more-experienced shooters will often identify this at the time, when underwater. For me I often have a 'crop' idea inside my head, perhaps when trying to convey a sense of a wide open space, or suggesting a feeling of horizontal motion. At other times I'm cropping to remove negative space. On more than a few occasions I just have a wide subject and when this occurs there is nothing more that I can do than capture the width of the idea and crop off the top and bottom of the frame.

This month's image is such an example. Towards the end of a photo dive beneath the pier at Misool Eco Resort in Raja Ampat, I came across a balled-up white anemone with three clownfish. I still had plenty of air and was no



more than 7m deep. The opportunity was accessible to both my camera and my body position on the sand, so I settled down for a session. Fortunately I was able to get below the anemone and include all three clowns in the frame of my Nikon D300. My priorities were depth of field wide enough to achieve sharp focus on all three clowns and a sense of compositional balance within my viewfinder. I used the white skirt of the anemone as negative space together with the black water background just above it. I pressed the shutter when all three clowns swam into my frame. After ten minutes or so I became selective in shooting only when the three clowns appeared to be in balance with each other. I took a total of 32 frames.

The screen grab (fig 1) of 12 frames is an ideal example of my attempts to balance the composition but for me the first image/middle line is what I was after in my 'mind's eye' and it was the first I cropped when I loaded to Lightroom. ■

EQUIPMENT AND SETTINGS

Nikon 60mm macro, F16 at 320th sec, ISO 400, two Inon 220 flashguns.

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Martin runs one-day photo tuition courses designed for one, two or three persons. He promises to improve your photo skills by at least five years. Go to www.edgeunderwaterphotography.com for details or email Martin direct on martin@edgeunderwaterphotography.com

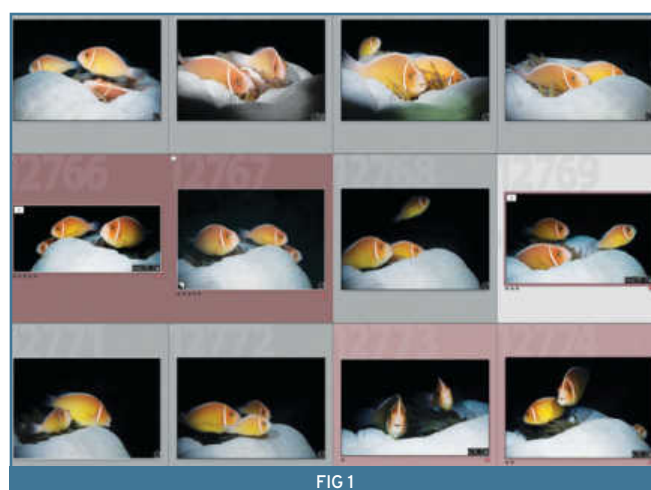


FIG 1

SIGNED BY THE AUTHOR!

The fourth edition of Martin's book, *The Underwater Photographer*, is now available. For a signed copy, phone 01202 887611 or email martin@edgeunderwaterphotography.com



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Lundy Island Seal Portrait, by Mark Hedges

A long-awaited day trip to Lundy Island was cursed by the weather gods, despite it being late July, and we were deluged by rain and harassed by strong winds. The first dive in loud vis produced some pretty glum expressions, and while eating soggy sandwiches for lunch, a seal head was spotted, then another! Only a couple, but still not sure who was more relieved, myself (organiser) or the skipper! We entered the water and were almost immediately surrounded by half a dozen playful seals. They weren't super friendly at first, a little timid and keeping a respectful distance, although within the cove's improved vis, they were clear to see putting on their acrobatic display for all to witness. While heading back to the vessel, a single seal approached me tugging at my fins, then posing as I turned to look as if to say 'what, it wasn't me'. The picture I took was of just such a moment. Despite the continued awful conditions, the boat was alive with the chitter chatter of the personal interactions of each diver and seals.

I was using an Olympus EPL5 in an Olympus housing, with a Sea & Sea YS-D1 single strobe, set to manual and adjusted according to light/subject conditions. Camera settings f11/250sec/ISO200.

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An underwater photograph showing a sandy seabed with several green seagrass blades. Some blades are upright and healthy, while others are broken or lying on the sand. The water is clear, and the lighting is bright, creating a naturalistic scene.

SHARKLAB *Malta*

Ocean conservationist **DAVID JONES** finds himself inspired by a group of volunteers who are rearing sharks rescued as eggs from the local fish market and returning them to the wild

Photographs by DAVID JONES AND JACQUI HEADLEY



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Cat shark in the wild

Cat sharks

Cat sharks are a wide-ranging species found in temperate and tropical waters. They have 'cat like' slits for eyes and two dorsal fins. It is the largest family of sharks and includes commonly encountered species such as the greater and lesser spotted dogfish and nursehounds. While some species lay live young, the vast majority lay eggs. These are commonly known as 'mermaid's purse' and are often found in rock pools and on beaches.



Mermaid's purse ready to hatch

As someone who works for a charity foundation committed to trying to save the world's oceans, I seem to be constantly bombarded by all the 'bad stuff' going on. Unnecessary shark culls in Australia, illegal whaling by the Japanese, the slaughter of pilot whales in the Faroe Islands... Shark finning continues in spite of all best efforts, and the agreements of CITES in March 2013 are being totally disregarded by many countries. All of this despite vehement and universal condemnation. I have to be honest it can all get rather depressing. So it was a wonderful surprise to find out about something which, albeit on a much-smaller scale, actually gives me a bit of hope for mankind.

It all came about through a conversation with Jacqui Hedley, PADI Staff Instructor and owner of Ocean Mysteries Dive Centre in Malta. We had been discussing the details of a dive club trip to Malta that I was planning, and at the end of the conversation she happened to say, 'Anyway, I'm off, need an early night as I am off to the fish market tomorrow at 3am to rescue sharks!' Er, like you do!

Further questioning revealed that she and a bunch of other insomniac divers were all volunteers for an organisation called Sharklab-Malta and they were literally rescuing sharks from the fish market. I was so intrigued that I just had to go and see this for myself.

Sharklab was founded by keen diver Greg Nowell, and a friend from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Andrej Gajic. They were concerned about the serious global decline of sharks, skates and rays and agreed that they had to make a difference somehow. Greg, as a diver living in Malta, had seen a decline in numbers of many species of marine life and with a passion for sharks wanted to do more. Regular visits to fish markets confirmed their suspicions; marine life numbers were in decline on a massive scale. As a result, Sharklab was born. Their aim was to engage with the general public to raise awareness about the plight of these animals, highlight how we cannot continue to fish these species unsustainably, conduct research and collect data that might be of use in hopefully ensuring that these species continue to survive.

They did this very successfully, turning up at fish markets to measure sharks, count the catch, and check for illegal species. On one of these early morning soirees, Greg was measuring a shark when he noticed a partially emerged egg case protruding from the shark. He recovered it and put it in a tank in his home. Suddenly, there was a new and potentially exciting element to the work of Sharklab. Could they actually rescue eggs from sharks and skates that had been caught and killed? Could they possibly provide an environment in which the eggs could continue to



Measuring dead sharks in the fish market

grow, possibly even hatch. Might they be able to return these hatchlings to the ocean?

Greg thought it had to be feasible and set about transforming a room in his already cramped house into what can best be described as a shark nursery. He collected several cat shark eggs and put them into tanks, trying to recreate the environment that would enable them to survive.

He would be the first to admit that it wasn't easy. Trying to replicate the environment for the eggs was trial and error. Temperature control was crucial, and working out the optimum conditions and then maintaining them was not easy, especially when you live on a Mediterranean island baked by the sun during the summer.

like Jacqui who get up several hours before any Teutonic towels have hit the poolside, to drive down to the fish market to rescue the eggs"

Eventually they had success and young pups were hatched. The gestation period in the eggs is around six months and then once hatched, in order to give the pups the best chance of survival, they needed to be kept for around another three to six months. This was not an insignificant commitment! Pretty rapidly, Greg's collection of eggs and pups outgrew his home-made capacity and as this happened to coincide with the construction of the new National Aquarium in Malta, Greg gave them a call and they decided to work together.

I was privileged to be invited to the release of three of these pups at the very beginning of this project, so I returned to Malta. It was a major event, not only for Malta, which is fully aware of its environmental responsibilities, but also for Greg and Sharklab. Politicians and the media were all there in force. It was also something special for all of the volunteers, people like Jacqui who get up several hours before any Teutonic towels have hit the poolside, to drive down to the fish market to rescue the eggs. They all give up their time because they care about the oceans and its inhabitants, especially sharks.

Several months on and the collaboration between Sharklab and the Aquarium has been amazing. To date they have released 101 sharks and there is a release of 50 planned for October. At this moment in time, Greg has 12 spotted cat shark pups at his home and there are around 50 at the Aquarium. They also have around 100 developing egg cases. It has

“Greg thought it had to be feasible and set about transforming a room in his already cramped house into what can best be described as a shark nursery”



A sad sight - dead sharks in the fish market

Donations welcome

Trying to fund small charitable organisations like Sharklab is extremely difficult. If like me you were moved by this story of a group of people doing some good and would like to help, please feel free. More information about Sharklab and the work of Greg and his volunteers can be found at: www.sharklab-malta.org. Sharklab is a registered charity and donations can be made by contacting Greg at: greg@sharklab-malta.org



Heading out to release the baby cat sharks



Juvenile about to head off into the sea

become a great working relationship and volunteers from Sharklab are often found at the Aquarium providing visitors with information about the rescued eggs and the sharks.

This whole project is, in my opinion, quite remarkable. Greg is the most unassuming, non-publicity grabbing person I have ever met. He never spoke in the first person, only the third, constantly praising the work undertaken by the people that support him. Everything he has done has been managed through time and effort of volunteers and whatever donations he has managed to collect.

I know this project will probably never directly change the impact of the overfishing of sharks, rays and skates, and Sharklab may never get the publicity that it probably deserves. But it is doing valuable research and it is making people listen. To me it was an eye-opening trip, that actually filled me with a great deal of hope. Having seen so much destruction and devastation happening daily to our oceans, here was the opposite side of the coin. I wrote in a Facebook page on my return that I hadn't met a group like this, with so much passion and dedication for the oceans and marine life. The only reason they do it is because they care. It really does give me hope for the human race. ■

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SOPRASSUB SILVER 4000 | £300 (€420.89)



The Silver 4000 is the evolution of the Silver 2000. This BCD is fully made of Cordura 1000 and is equipped with five stainless steel D-rings of 50mm and another two D-rings of 25mm, so it's ideal for advanced recreational divers searching for a rugged and reliable piece of equipment. The bladder has a high volume and in size L reaches 20kg of buoyancy. On both sides on the higher part of the pockets there are two slots for storing the folded octopus hose, that can be very easily pulled out in case of need. Moreover it has integrated weight pockets, very easy to release, that can contain up to 5kg on each side.

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AMARANTO AMK3915/3916 £200 (€280.49)



The first stage is a balanced diaphragm and delivers superior breathing performance even at increased depths. It's made of a black chrome-plated corrosion-resistant marine brass and in its ICE version is suitable for cold waters. It is as standard supplied with Viton O-rings for use with enriched air. The two high pressure ports and four low pressure ports are positioned and angled to allow ideal DIR configurations.

The ovally shaped second stage is very light in weight and creates minimum water resistance to sideways movements and thanks to the anatomic mouthpiece is extremely comfortable. The regulator is adjustable and has a lever to control the Venturi effect. Moreover, as standard it is possible to interchange the connection of the hose so it can come from the left side as well as the right. The braided hose is 70cm long.

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SCUBAPRO AIR2 | £135 (€188)



Scubapro introduced the octo/inflator to diving almost 30 years ago with the original AIR2. Since then, this popular octo/inflator has undergone four generations of design innovation. For 2015, the fifth generation AIR2 offers divers even more in both performance and ease of use. In terms of performance, Scubapro engineers have managed to reduce the new AIR2's WOB (work of breathing) by half, meaning it delivers air as smoothly as most primary second stages.

The new AIR2 is also easier to use. The flexible purge cover is large and easy to locate, allowing for quick clearing when it comes time to take a breath. In addition, a new Dive/Pre-Dive switch lets divers detune the octo when it's not being used, eliminating free flows, while enabling it to deliver generous airflow when needed.

The AIR2 not only offers superb performance as a backup regulator, design upgrades have also improved the user-friendliness of the BCD inflator/deflator system.

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SCUBALAB GEAR GUIDE

Each month, the Sport Diver test team assembles to rate and review a selection of diving equipment from a range of manufacturers. This issue:

B **D** **E**

BCDS. BCDs are one of the core essentials of your dive kit - after all, without it, you aren't going to have anything to hold your tank (as well as your regulators) on your back, and you will have no means of buoyancy control (unless you are in a drysuit, but let's not get into that debate!).

We split the BCDs into three price brackets - under £250, £250-£400, and over £400 - and then assembled the Test Team to venture into the chilly waters of Vivian Quarry in the heart of Snowdonia in North Wales in June for the annual review.

This issue we are focusing on the top-of-the-line range to see what is available in today's marketplace. As well as giving our opinion on the looks of the jackets - after all, aesthetics are becoming increasingly important in diving - we also comment on the comfort of the BCDs, and the ease of use and performance of power inflators, pull dumps, pockets, integrated weights, etc.

THE TEST TEAM



MARK EVANS

- Sport Diver editor
- PADI Divemaster
- 30 years of diving experience



MATT MARTIN

- Dive officer, Blue Planet Aquarium
- PADI OWSI
- 10 years of diving experience



WILL HARRISON

- Sport Diver deputy editor
- PADI TEC 50
- 6 years of diving experience



BARRY HENDERSON

- Rope access specialist
- NAUI OW Diver
- 5 years of diving experience

BCDS ON TEST

MODELS

- Apeks Black Ice
- Aqualung Axiom i3
- Hollis HD200
- Mares Hybrid
- Oceanic Excursion
- Scubapro X-Black

DATE TESTED 15/6/15

WATER TEMPERATURE
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Test dives conducted at Vivian Diving Centre in Llanberis, North Wales

"This issue we are focusing on the top-of-the-line range to see what is available in today's marketplace"



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BEFORE YOU HIT THE WATER: Get comfortable - adjust the internal ends of the cummerbund so the outer ends overlap between three to six inches when secured over your stomach. Prep for tank - thread tank strap(s) through their buckles, and then slip on to your tank, making such buckles are centred and Velcro patches are positioned where they can be utilised.



APEKS BLACK ICE | £499 (€703)




MARK: This is a seriously solid, well-built piece of kit, as you'd expect coming from Apeks. It is quite a chunky unit, and it 'gives you a hug' when you are wearing it because of the way it closes around you. It is extremely comfortable thanks to the thick backpad, and the SureLock II integrated weight system works well. The pockets are easy to access and an ample size. Pull dumps and power inflator combo work well together.


WILL: Rugged BCD. This is quite a big unit, so bear that in mind if you are thinking of travelling with it. However, it is a great UK diving jacket. The big pockets work well alongside the integrated weight system, and the pull dumps are very efficient. Simple design and subtle looks will not date.

MATT: Cool, understated looks. Instantly felt familiar, even though this was the first time I had ever dived in one. The power inflator is efficient, and the pull dumps are rapid. Apeks have certainly done their homework on this BCD.

BARRY: This is a big jacket, but thanks to the adjustable grommets, you can personalise the fit, which means that one size will fit medium and large people. In its smallest setting, it offered me a snug fit, and tank movement was zero. Everything worked as it should, and I liked the no-fuss design and looks.

SPORT DIVER VERDICT	
PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
COMFORT	★★★★★
LOOKS	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★

**WE LIKE**
Build quality, comfort, performance

**WE DON'T LIKE**
Nothing worth mentioning

AQUALUNG AXIOM I3 | £479 (€674)



MARK: Very comfortable jacket, both on the surface and in the water. It has the tried-and-tested SureLock II integrated weight system, and has reasonable pockets which are easily accessible. Supportive in the water, with little tank movement. It has the i3 inflation/deflation unit fitted, which works extremely well and stops the front of the BCD looking cluttered.


WILL: Nice jacket. Snug fit keeps everything where it should be, and I particularly like the swivelling shoulder clips. Plenty of D-rings and easy-to-access pockets. I am a big fan of the i3 inflation/deflation unit, which falls easily to hand and is extremely efficient.


MATT: Good-looking BCD, not too

flash but it will stand the test of time and not date too quickly. Great in the water, with plenty of support, and the i3 unit is a nifty addition. Not a fan of the pinch-clip strap that goes around the neck of the cylinder - this is a weak point that lets down an otherwise great BCD.

BARRY: Brilliant jacket. Holds you well on the surface and underwater, with minimal tank roll. Pockets are a good size and easy to get to, the integrated weight system is one of the best here, and I love the i3 inflation/deflation unit - it is just so simple to use. Nice piece of kit all round.

SPORT DIVER VERDICT	
PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
COMFORT	★★★★★
LOOKS	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★

**WE LIKE**
Comfort, build quality, performance

**WE DON'T LIKE**
Nothing worth mentioning



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Scubapro MK25/S600 Regulator with R195 Octo & Twin Console



BEFORE YOU HIT THE WATER: Give it a thorough check-over - turn on the air in your cylinder and inflate the BCD to test for leaks and proper power-inflator function. Pull all of the dump valve cords to make sure the exhausts are working correctly and that there is no wear and tear to the string. If fitted, ensure integrated weights are securely in place.

HOLLIS HD200 | £450 (€633)



MARK: This Hollis wing certainly stands out from the crowd thanks to the addition of colourful red panels. It is very comfortable, and stable in the water. The pockets, albeit fairly compact, are easy to access. The integrated weight system works fine, and the power inflator is efficient. However, we were having a few issues with the kidney dump, which was in a bit of an awkward position and struggled to keep up with the inflator.

WILL: Very comfortable wing-style BCD - had an 'armchair feel' to it. The power inflator is rapid, but the pull dumps really had a hard time dumping fast enough to keep up with it. Small pockets, but easy enough to get at.

MATT: This wing-style BCD has

quite flashy looks, but it is comfortable, stable on the surface and underwater, and seems to be built to last. Not too sure of the performance and positioning of the pull dumps - they seemed a bit awkward.

BARRY: I really like the look of this BCD, and the flashes of red help liven things up a bit, but in the water it just didn't do it for me. It is comfortable enough, but I didn't like the pull dumps - I struggled to locate the kidney dump. And I just feel that the crotch strap is unnecessary and there to give it a 'tech' feel.

SPORT DIVER VERDICT	
PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
COMFORT	★★★★★
LOOKS	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★



WE LIKE

Build quality, comfort, looks



WE DON'T LIKE

Pull dumps struggled to keep up with the power inflator

MARES HYBRID | £400 (€562)



MARK: We had a Hybrid in our Long Term Test stable and it impressed then. I think the jacket is very comfortable, thanks to the 'suspension system' in the rear, and it is nice and supportive in the water. Great integrated weight system, ergonomic power inflator, and decent pull dumps. The pockets are a bit awkward to access. Good all-round jacket.

WILL: Really good jacket. Very comfortable and nicely made, with subtle good looks. The dumps work well and are paired up with a smooth power inflator. Decent pockets, with reversed zippers.

MATT: Typical Italian styling (reminds me of a Recaro race seat!) but everything is done for a reason - it is truly built for purpose. Comfortable on the

surface and underwater, but I found that I had a bit of tank roll when swimming in a trim position. Good power inflator and pull dumps, and an efficient integrated weight system.

BARRY: Comfortable jacket, equipped with a decent power inflator, good pull dumps with chunky toggles, and a neat integrated weight system. The styling is fairly subtle, so it won't date too quickly, and it is a bargain price.

SPORT DIVER VERDICT	
PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
COMFORT	★★★★★
LOOKS	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★



WE LIKE

Price, build quality, performance



WE DON'T LIKE

Nothing worth mentioning



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RETURNING HOME AFTER A DAY'S DIVING: Hose it - start the cleaning process with a hearty wash using a freshwater hose. This will knock off any big chunks of sand and dirt, as well as residual salt. Soak it - Fill a tub with fresh water, dunk the BCD repeatedly, then leave it to soak for about five minutes. Afterwards, give it another slosh with the fresh water hose.

OCEANIC EXCURSION | £445 (€625)



MARK: Extremely comfortable BCD, which offers plenty of support on the surface and underwater, the latter in particular as the wing keeps you nice and stable in a good trim position. The pockets are well thought out and work well in conjunction with the integrated weight pouches. Efficient power inflator and pull dumps. Great all-round BCD.

WILL: Very comfortable BCD, which is solid in the water, the wing holding you safe and secure. The integrated weight system works well, and the padded backpack is a godsend. The pockets are easy to access, and the power inflator/pull dump combo is more than adequate.

MATT: I like the understated looks of this wing-style BCD. It is very

comfortable, and provides plenty of support on the surface and during the dive. It is robustly built to last, has decent pockets, a good power inflator and reasonable pull dumps.

BARRY: Nice jacket. I do like the subtle looks and design touches. It offers a snug fit, and is extremely well balanced underwater - no tank roll, and plenty of support from the wing. The integrated weights work well, as does the power inflator and pull dumps. Good all-round piece of kit at a decent price.

SPORT DIVER VERDICT	
PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
COMFORT	★★★★★
LOOKS	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★



WE LIKE

Build quality, comfort, looks, performance



WE DON'T LIKE

Nothing worth mentioning

SCUBAPRO X-BLACK | £549 (€770)



MARK: Another BCD that we have had in the Long Term Test line up for the past six months. Absolutely fantastic jacket. Extremely comfortable, equipped with rapid pull dumps and power inflator, with a solid integrated weight system and easy-to-access pockets. Supportive on the surface and underwater. Well designed, and good looking.

WILL: Super comfy BCD, with a great design - lovely bit of kit. The multiple pockets are all easy to get to, the power inflator is rapid, matched by pull dumps with chunky toggles. Efficient clip-style integrated weights.

MATT: I really liked this BCD. Scubapro has gone all-out to make a great traditional-style BCD, and they have done a

remarkable job - it is pretty faultless, really. It looks good, performs well, and all the necessary bits and pieces are here. Very nice - impressed!

BARRY: Really good jacket that works well underwater and on the surface. Fits like a glove, which meant no tank movement at all. Easy-to-access pockets, powerful inflator, rapid pull dumps and a great integrated weight system. Top of the tree when it comes to price, but it is a fantastic jacket.

SPORT DIVER VERDICT	
PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
COMFORT	★★★★★
LOOKS	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★



WE LIKE

Build quality, looks, performance, comfort



WE DON'T LIKE

Nothing worth mentioning





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RETURNING HOME AFTER A DAY'S DIVING: Final okay - make sure everything is in working order by reinserting the - empty - integrated weight pockets and locking them in place, fully inflating the bladder and checking for leaks, and then pulling the corrugated hose dump and pull dump cords. Partially inflate the bladder and hang-dry the BCD out of direct sunlight.



CONCLUSION. At this price bracket, you'd expect the BCDs on review to be of a decent standard, and I am pleased to say there was nothing here to raise any eyebrows in a negative way. Some did things better than others, but all provided a stable base for your tank and regulator and would make a great BCD for use in the UK.

For the Best Value award, it was a battle between the Oceanic Excursion and the Mares Hybrid. These two were at the bottom of the table in terms of price, but still scored well for looks, comfort, performance and features. The Hybrid is a well-built, extremely comfortable jacket, but the Oceanic Excursion was equally good and just nudged ahead to take the title.

For the Choice award, it was a battle between the Scubapro X-Black, the Apeks Black Ice and the Aqualung Axiom i3. It was a close-run thing. The Apeks was a belting BCD, though a little on the heavy side, and the Aqualung had the i3 inflation/deflation system, which won plenty of fans in the team, but the X-Black just blew everyone away with its combination of cracking looks, impeccable performance and robust built quality to be crowned winner of the Choice award.

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SCUBALAB TEST EXTRA

FOURTH ELEMENT XENOS 3MM | £199 (€278.78)



Mark Evans: I am a big fan of the Fourth Element Proteus 3mm, which I think is one of the warmest on the market, thanks to its lengthy wrist and ankle seals, and over-the-head neck seal. However, while I personally have never had much of an issue getting it on, according to Fourth Element's Jim Standing, many people said that it was quite a chore to don. That's where the Xenos comes in.

From the outset, the Xenos was designed to be exceptionally easy to get on and off, as well as keep you warm, not to mention still look good (this is a Fourth Element suit, after all!). The 3mm full-length suit, which is available in men's and women's versions, is made from a very-stretchy neoprene, which explains why it is so quick and easy to get on. I literally could get into the suit in less than a minute, and that was without rush-

ing like a madman. It just stretched and slid on like a dream. Likewise, getting it off was a doddle as well.

I used the 3mm suit for a week of diving in Bonaire in the Caribbean. The water temperature was around 28 degrees C, which is lovely and warm, but after several hour-plus dives, my core temp was still dropping, and so I was pleased to be in the Xenos. It might not be quite as warm as the range-topping Proteus, but it isn't far off. The seams are all double-glued and blindstitched on the seams to minimise water entry, and the Hydrolock wrist seals, Glideskin neck seal and internal ankle seals also work well to help stop excess water movement.

The suit also features hardwearing knee panels, and thanks to the sleek design, which on the men's includes a 'six-pack' on the chest, it is extremely flattering - or as

flattering as a skin-tight suit can be!

There is one thing that certainly sets the male version of the 3mm Xenos apart from its rivals, and you can't have failed to notice from the photographs - yes, I am talking about that colour. It is also available in the same black/grey colour scheme as the 5mm incarnation if you so wish, but as the Fourth Element marketing spiel goes, 'blue is the new black'. Now the 'alloy blue' is vivid, rather than some washed-out pastel effort, and it does indeed stand out in the crowd, but be prepared for plenty of playful banter from your fellow divers about being a superhero. In its blue variant, it is definitely not a suit for shrinking violets!

The Xenos 3mm is also available in shortie versions for both men and women, with the same colour options as the full-length suits.

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SCUBALAB TEST EXTRA

FOURTH ELEMENT XENOS 5MM | £239 (€338)



Mark Evans: As stated on the previous page, I am a big fan of the Fourth Element Proteus, and that includes the 5mm version. Just as with its 3mm sibling, I am of the opinion that it is one of the warmest on the market, as it also features the same lengthy wrist and ankle seals, and over-the-head neck seal. Similarly, I have never had a problem getting in and out of this suit either, though admittedly the 5mm is more of a chore than the 3mm, but to be honest, that goes for just about any 3mm versus 5mm. Jim Standing and the Fourth Element team set about creating the 5mm Xenos to be just as easy to get into as the 3mm version.

The 5mm full-length suit, which is available in men's and women's versions, is made

from the same super-stretchy neoprene as the 3mm, just obviously in a slightly thicker guise. Just as with the 3mm version, I could get into this suit easily, in this case in a matter of minutes, without any problems. I used the 5mm suit for a week of diving in the Red Sea out of Na'ama Bay. The water temperature was around 25 degrees C, but I was diving on the Long Term Test Hollis Explorer and so was running long dive times, which meant I was very happy to be in the Xenos to stave off feeling cold. As with the 3mm version, it is not quite as warm as the range-topping Proteus, but there wasn't that much in it, to be truthful. The construction is the same as the 3mm - the seams are all double-glued and blind-stitched to minimise water entry, and the

Hydrolock wrist seals, Glideskin neck seal and internal ankle seals also help stop any flushing or excess water movement within the suit. A double smoothskin zip-flap further reduces water coming in through the back zipper. The Thermoflex lining, and Thermocore chest panel, really keep your body insulated against feeling cold. The 5mm suit also features the hardwearing knee panels, and boasts the same sleek design, including the 'six-pack' on the male version chest. However, the 5mm Xenos is currently only available in the neat black/grey colour scheme, not the eye-catching blue variant of the 3mm, but this may be coming later in the year.

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SCUBALAB LONG TERM

OCEANIC VEO 1

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INFORMATION	
DATE ACQUIRED	AUGUST 2015
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	£135
NUMBER OF DIVES	0
TIME IN WATER	0 HRS 0 MINS

Mark Evans
www.oceanicuk.com

APEKS LIFELINE 30-METRE POOL

One of the first things that strikes you about the Apeks Lifeline pool is its feel. Made from a solid chunk of aluminium, everyone I have shown it to has spent several minutes just, well, fondling it, I guess is the best description!



But it isn't all just looks. The large hole easily accommodates gloved finger and thumb when in use.

INFORMATION	
DATE ACQUIRED	MAY 2015
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	£60
NUMBER OF DIVES	28
TIME IN WATER	26 HRS 55 MINS

Mark Evans, www.apeks.co.uk

AQUALUNG PRO

The Aqualung Pro might be an entry-level jacket, but that doesn't mean the company has skimmed when it comes to finishing touches. As you can see from the photograph, the detailing in the stitching and tabs on the zippers is just up to the same standard as the more expensive BCDs in their range.

The Pro also uses the same power inflator as its pricier siblings, ensuring that you have total control over your buoyancy. Apart from the lack of integrated weights - which is what has kept the price point down - this is a well-equipped BCD that is also light enough to take on holiday with you.



INFORMATION	
DATE ACQUIRED	JULY 2015
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	£245
NUMBER OF DIVES	0
TIME IN WATER	0 HRS 0 MINS

Mark Evans
www.aqualung.com

SCUBAPRO MANTIS M1

The Mantis was designed from the outset to be used for other things, not just diving, hence why it has the swim functions and altimeter, etc, but not only that, it is not too big and chunky to be used as an everyday watch.

It is also robustly constructed - I have been wearing it while jetskiing, and as I put the ski back on the trailer, I managed to bash the Mantis against the winch, but not even a mark.



INFORMATION	
DATE ACQUIRED	MAY 2015
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	£369
NUMBER OF DIVES	16
TIME IN WATER	15 HRS 40 MINS

Mark Evans
www.scubapro.co.uk



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URSUIT HEAVY LIGHT KEVLAR BDS



It's been a quiet month for me diving-wise. But with a long weekend in Malta coming up, when I'll be undertaking my Hollis Explorer eSCR course, the Ursuit will be getting plenty of test time. It'll be interesting comparing the suit to the one I was wearing for my tech courses, which I also did in Malta. I have a feeling, if the dozen or so dives I've done in it so far are anything to go by, that it will be a joy to use throughout.

Will Harrison
www.liquidsports.co.uk

INFORMATION

DATE ACQUIRED	MARCH 2015
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	£1,600
NUMBER OF DIVES	14
TIME IN WATER	13 HRS 45 MINS

FINN SUB 3000 SHORT



Still none the wiser as to why the Finn Sub 3000 Short is periodically going off within five to ten minutes after being given a full charge. I did a few 'bucket' tests, whereby I charged it up overnight and then put it into a bucket of water on full power and timed how long it remained on before turning off. On all occasions, it lasted around an hour, which is normal, but then the next time I took it on a dive, it again switched off after ten minutes!

Mark Evans
www.finnsub.com

INFORMATION

DATE ACQUIRED	APRIL 2015
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	£549
NUMBER OF DIVES	25
TIME IN WATER	23 HRS 40 MINS

HOLLIS EXPLORER eSCR

Big news! The Hollis Explorer eSCR is now less than four grand. It is still a lot of money, but every little helps, and this amount can only be driven down in the future as more and more units hit the market.

I am a big fan of the CO2 sensor, which is an optional extra for the Explorer, but well worth investing in. It cuts down the pre-breathe from five minutes to one minute, as well as obviously improving safety by adding in another check to the loop gas alongside the three O2 sensors. The little beads that keep moisture off the sensor are easy to use - you just empty in a small amount to the cover, and then when they go dark green from a bright orange, it is time to replace them. You keep the 'dead' beads and can resurrect them in the microwave!

Mark Evans
www.hollis.com



INFORMATION

DATE ACQUIRED	MARCH 2015
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	£3,995
NUMBER OF DIVES	42
TIME IN WATER	41 HRS 15 MINS

KUBI DRY GLOVE SYSTEM

END OF TERM



That's it, the end of the six-month trial with the KUBI Dry Glove System, and I think it is safe to say that I never want to go back to wet gloves again!

The KUBIs proved to be a revelation, and to this day, every time I put them on I can't get over how easy they are to get on and off.

The benefits of having warm, dry hands just cannot be emphasised enough, and the retro-fit of the KUBIs means they can be fitted to pretty much any suit on the market. And if you do manage to rip one, as I did during the test period, a spare pair only cost £8, and it is literally a two-minute job to switch out a broken one for a new one. KUBIs - big thumbs up from me!

Mark Evans
www.KUBIstore.com

INFORMATION

DATE ACQUIRED	FEBRUARY 2015
SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE	£156
NUMBER OF DIVES	47
TIME IN WATER	45 HRS 45 MINS



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Carry on TEKCAMP

Now in its fifth year, TEKCamp continues to attract the biggest names in tech diving for a five-day festival of dive mentoring, talks and fun. JASON BROWN was there to get the inside scoop...

Photographs by JASON BROWN



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*detail of the
external zipper*



sleeve with velcro



large thigh pocket



detail of the booties



*shoulder braces
with buckles*



*detail
of the booties*



*detail of the
neoprene sock*



*waterpro
from inside*



www.soprassub.com



Phil Short on his Sentinel rebreather

It's been five long years since Vobster Quay opened its gates for the very first TEKCamp. Despite its humble beginnings, the event has always had lofty ambitions - to enthuse and develop the next generation of technical divers by giving them unfettered access to some of the biggest names in technical diver training and exploration. While this core remit hasn't changed much over the years, the scope and ambition of the event certainly has, with this year's TEKCamp promising to be the biggest yet.

Over the space of five days, TEKCamp promises to 'transform you into a safer, more-capable and more-confident diver' by putting you through a series of daily diving workshops focusing on progressively more advanced skills ranging from basic propulsion, valve shutdowns and rescue skills to more-advanced stuff like line-laying, deco bottle juggling and failures management. It's all done in a very progressive manner, with each workshop tailored to the unique needs and abilities of each attendee.



Jill Heinerth in full flow

TECH TOP TRUMPS

Add into the mix the opportunity to try dive a closed circuit rebreather, zip around the lake on a high-performance tech scooter and take in a packed schedule of talks from world-class speakers and it's easy to see why TEKCamp continues to attract divers from across the UK and Europe, many of whom return year after year. While the weather gods didn't seem to get the memo requesting good weather, the mid-July rain didn't seem to dampen the spirits of those in attendance.

Once again, the organisers secured a top-flight line up of instructors representing all the leading technical training agencies. Joining TEKCamp stalwarts Martin Robson, Paul Vincent Toomer, Mark Powell and Richard Walker, this year saw the welcome return of IANTD UK training director Phil Short and a new face to the already star-studded line up - popular Danish tech guru Rasmus Dysted.

PADI's Director of Rebreather Technologies Vikki Batten was back to fly the flag for PADI Tec-Rec. We asked Vikki why an event like TEKCamp is so unique. "TEKCamp creates the perfect environment to move your diving up to the next level, whatever your current experience. Attendees get to chat, dive and work with some of the best tech instructors in the world in an atmosphere of collaboration, fun and role modelling. TEKCamp is so much more than the sum of its parts - the combination of instructors, staff, manufacturers and attendees creates a unique environment where divers learn and grow at an exponential rate," she said.

But what about the TEKCamp instructors - what do they get out of it? "TEKCamp is a learning environment for all of us, not just the attendees and I always pick up new knowledge, ideas and tips. I love the chance to work with old friends and to make new ones, but most of all I enjoy the challenge of matching my teaching skills to the needs of the attendees and watching them improve and grow throughout the week. As instructors, TEKCamp highlights our similarities, not our differences - we may work for different organisations, but our friendships go back a long way and we share the same overarching ideals," she said.

TEKCamp isn't just about squaring away fundamental skills, though. For more advanced divers, TEKCamp 2015 saw the introduction of a new 'Deco Station' workshop developed by TEKCamp instructor Martin Robson. A seasoned explorer in his own right, this new workshop gave attendees an insight into the techniques used for expedition-level deep



Rasmus Dysted (right) offering advice on sidemount

BEYOND TECHNICAL

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Martin Robson was busy at TEKCamp



wreck diving. A deco station provides a stepped 'trapeze' that allows divers to complete their decompression by moving up through a series of horizontal beams set a predetermined depths.

The concept is simple enough - each member of the dive team is assigned a unique tag that is used to communicate to the rest of the team whether they're still on the wreck. After dropping the deco station into the water from a pair of support boats and connecting it to the down line, each diver descends the downline and 'tags in' when they reach the point where the downline connects to the weighted travel line that runs across to the deco station. As each diver then leaves the wreck, they remove their tag and use the travel line to move across to the deepest part of the deco station. After checking that all divers had 'tagged out', the last team then disconnects the deco station from the wreck, allowing it (and all divers) to drift with the tide.

CANADA CALLING...

Bringing a decidedly Canadian flavour to this year's TEKCamp, a big highlight for many was the attendance of famous underwater explorer, environmental activist and renowned underwater photographer Jill Heinerth. Based in Florida but born and raised in Canada, Thanks to the good folk at Suunto UK, TEKCamp attendees got the unique opportunity to not only meet but also dive with Jill.

When not in the water running sidemount and line-laying workshops, Jill shared her passion for diving during one of several keynote presentations held on each night of TEKCamp. An inspiring story of intrigue and adventure that wouldn't be out of place in the pages of National Geographic magazine, Jill entertained the audience with a journey around the world on many of her exciting expeditions. Ever wondered what it's

like to explore the inside of an iceberg that's fracturing around you? Or journey to the dark heart of Africa to locate the sacred desert springs that form the cradle of life? Jill has quite literally been there and done it.

There was certainly no shortage of great talks at this year's TEKCamp. Whatever your interest, there was something to interest you - Phil Short took us on a journey underground into the J2 cave system in Mexico while Kieran Hatton wowed the crowd with his talk on exploring the wrecks of Truk Lagoon on a rebreather. Leigh Bishop gave two talks - one on his recent expd to Sierra Leone, and the other about epic dives on the likes of the Britannic and the Lusitania. For those looking for practical knowledge and advice, Vikki Batten's talk on dealing with diving incidents gave food for thought while popular 'deco guru' Mark Powell brought us up to date with the latest deco knowledge with an in-depth discussion of the latest research into deep stops.

ORGANISED CHAOS

With four TEKCamp's already under their belt, it's safe to say that the team at Vobster Quay really do have the event down pat. With more than 100 attendees, safety divers, instructors, support staff, media types and dive trade professionals going about their business, it would be all too easy to lose yourself in the chaos of it all - like a finely-oiled machine running on high-octane fuel, the facade of organised chaos belies the high degree of organisation that keeps an event like TEKCamp running so smoothly.

Ultimately it's the experience of the TEKCamp attendees that really matters. TEKCamp attracts a broad range of divers, from recreational divers to hardcore rebreather divers and seasoned tech instructors. Among the many new faces at this year's event, we cornered diver Sam Smith. An experienced PADI instructor with no prior tech training, TEK-Camp was a bit of a leap of faith for Sam.

"I came to TEKCamp not really knowing what to expect and I was a complete beginner to technical diving. What I got was a complete grounding in sidemount diving to the extent I would be confident in jumping in the water today and going for a dive! It was awesome and I cannot recommend it highly enough - for a 100 percent recreational diver, it was a pivotal diving experience for me," she explained.

For more info, visit: www.tekcamp.co.uk ■



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APPARENTLY, TECH DIVERS DON'T LIKE FISH!

VIKKI BATTEN sets out to dispel, once and for all, the myth that tech divers are only interested in going deep

Photographs courtesy of PADI

There is a myth that tech divers aren't interested in underwater critters and corals, only in carrying lots of kit, going deeper and staying longer. The (il?)logic seems to be that tech divers like deep wrecks, so they can't possibly be interested in anything else. Seeing as we spend a lot of time underwater, we must spend that time doing something, so I think it is time to put this myth not just to rest, but to show that tech diving is great for fish and other underwater critters. Like any other group of divers, our exact preferences and passions are individual, but my experience has shown me that the shout of 'dolphins off the bow' is met with equal enthusiasm, no matter what kind of diver you are! Underwater, there are few divers who are not excited by the sight of sharks and rays cruising by, the amazing display of a Spanish dancer at night, a gentle turtle munching on coral, or the chance to see a seahorse swaying in the sea grass. My recent trip to the Red Sea highlighted how great tech divers can be in their interactions with the environment and how their skills make them natural role models for other divers. Not only were these tech divers interested in the environment, but they were interacting with it in the ideal passive way and they set a great example to others. The trip was a rebreather excursion with a range of abilities and experience spread over three boats. On this particular dive, the majority of the boats were trimix diving on Panorama Reef, near Safaga. This is a stunning dive with sloping ledges at each end of a long reef and beautiful drop-offs on each side. Although each group had different dive plans, the fantastic visibility meant that as we all drifted along the wall towards the end of our dive, I could see small groups decompressing at all depths. We were not the only boat on the reef and at one point I noticed a group of recreational divers below me rush towards their dive guide. It was clear that the guide had spotted something and everyone wanted to see it. I have no idea what it was but from my vantage point, I could see the group all converge on a point on the wall, cameras at the ready. Everyone was trying to get a photo and see whatever creature it was (I never did find out). There was a short flurry of activity, then they all swam off, heading up. Behind them, I noticed a couple of groups from our boat. They had seen the same thing, but were hanging back, hovering in mid-water, not because they weren't interested, but because they had plenty of time and could afford to wait. When the recreational group had moved on, the tech divers swam in a

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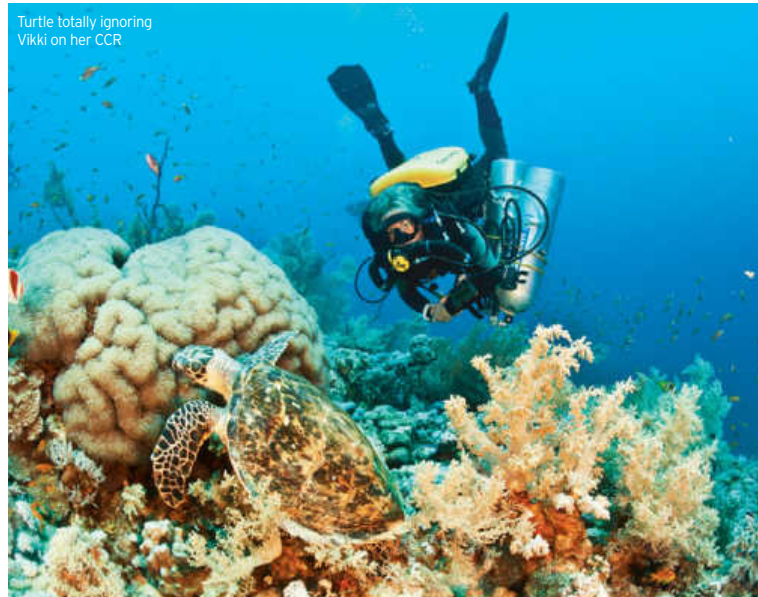
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couple at a time. There was no rush, no bumping into each other and no disturbance to the environment. When they had finished, another few divers moved in to look and take photos. The contrast struck me like... well, like a group of divers charging towards an underwater creature! The recreational group had not done anything wrong, but perhaps they could've learnt a thing or two from the techies. I can only imagine how the creature(s) may have felt faced with a group of 12 or more divers all clamouring to see. Maybe frightened, maybe defensive, maybe distracted from what they were doing? In this case, whatever it was didn't swim off, but I'm sure we have all witnessed occasions when divers have chased off an animal that would probably have stuck around for much longer if the divers had hung back a little and given it more space. What we all need to aim for is passive interaction with the environment. That means we don't touch anything and we try to behave in a way that allows the creatures to carry on with their lives as though we weren't there. Although there are a few animals that genuinely want to interact with us in an active way, most don't. Those that do like to play with us should be allowed to come to us, not be chased, grabbed and held. So, this is where tech diver training, experience and equipment can work to yours and the environment's advantage. Excellent buoyancy control, trim and finning technique can all help you interact with the environment and other divers in a measured, calm and controlled way. Of course, you don't have to be a tech diver for this, just keep working on your dive technique. Time limits are something divers have to work within on every dive. Tech

"The combination of a quiet, bubble-free diver who moves slowly and calmly seems to be much more acceptable to underwater creatures than noisy, bubbly divers with rapid movements"

Turtle totally ignoring Vikki on her CCR



Tech divers like marine life just as much as recreational divers



CCR divers can approach fish much closer than those on open circuit



diving tends to give you more in-water time and this helps avoid the need to rush in. Wall or multi-level dives not only give you more time at any level, but on tech dives they can turn your deco from something that must be endured into an integral and amazing part of your dive. Not only are you 'hanging around', vertically, but you may also be able to continue swimming along the wall/reef extending the area that you get to see. This is a time when you can really look at the small things and many tech divers become interested in nudibranchs, corals and the really tiny macro critters. Although tech diving is not all about going deeper, there are certainly some big attractions to doing so. Deeper dive sites are less visited by divers and less affected by ocean conditions and this means they are often much better preserved. Although there is usually less variety of life, animals that live at depth are often bigger. Some creatures

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*"She now lies in just over 50m and was the first dive
I did that really showed BIG fish at depth"*

choose to live deeper, so if you can dive into their natural environment, you will have a much better chance of seeing them. There is a mid-Channel wreck between France and the UK called the Lanfranc. She was a hospital ship during World War One, but was sunk during a return trip from Le Havre in 1917, carrying more than 500 people. Fortunately, her escort ships were able to rescue most onboard, but the ship went down with 34 people. She now lies in just over 50m and was the first dive I did that really showed BIG fish at depth. They are the same fish you see on other mid-Channel wrecks, just twice the size! Some of these whoppers were parrotfish, just like the ones you see in the Red Sea, tootling around the decks going about their normal business. With phenomenal visibility, their colour showed up in my torch beam as well as on any recreational dive. Probably the most-common reason recreational divers head to the edges of their depth limits is the opportunity to see sharks. Jackson Reef, in the Straits of Tiran, is frequently host to groups of divers hovering around 40m, trying to catch a glimpse of the sharks that prefer to stay a little deeper. The first time I did this trip with a tech group, I was using my rebreather and we didn't even worry about searching for sharks. We just planned our dive and there at 60m, the hammerheads were swimming along calmly and quietly. They took very little notice of our small group and we just observed them for a while. This wasn't the only dive we saw sharks, and frequently we saw them in places where they are rarely seen by recreational divers, even once early in the morning on a house reef. Not to mention lots of turtles and rays, all sticking to the quieter areas of the reef and enriching the deeper part of our dives. That brings me onto rebreathers. Many creatures are disturbed by open circuit scuba divers' bubbles, so a rebreather can help them to feel more comfortable with

our intrusion into their world. The combination of a quiet, bubble-free diver who moves slowly and calmly seems to be much more acceptable to underwater creatures than noisy, bubbly divers with rapid movements. Clouds of fish don't even move out of your way, treating you like a fellow sea creature. Many times on the PADI Rebreather or Advanced Rebreather Diver courses, students are amazed by what they see. In fact, I recall editor Mark Evans writing about the things he saw during his course and wishing he had his camera with him... c'est la vie! Of course, there are other things that can also help you get the most out of your underwater encounters: learning about the normal behaviour of the creatures you are diving with so that you know what you are seeing, understand the actions you are viewing and can interact without provoking a defensive reaction will maximise your enjoyment, while also minimising the environmental impact you have. For example, once I learned that a clownfish's territory is a cone shape, I was able to get close without intruding into their territory. Now, I can watch them behaving normally and they don't feel like they need to chase me away. Although this is not tech specific, having the time to watch and learn while you are underwater makes it easier. ■

*If you would like to get involved in or learn more about how you can use your skills to help the environment, visit: www.projectaware.org
Vikki Batten is PADI's Director of Rebreather Technologies in the Technical Diving Division. Her idea of a great dive would be any dive where she gets a glimpse of the secret underwater world; the way it is when we are not there. Her chosen tool for the job would be a rebreather, no matter what the depth, and she would also take a camera along, to help with identification later.*

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FOCUS ON **NARKED AT 90**

SPORT DIVER visits the premises of technical parts manufacturer, CE-tester
and service centre Marked at 90

Photographs by SPORT DIVER

Rebreathers are becoming increasingly mainstream. Head to any UK inland dive site these days and you're sure to find a CCR being prepped or pre-breathed at the waterside. But it wasn't that long ago that these machines were the domain of the engineer, the lateral thinker, the self-styled tinkerer. John Routley, founder and managing director of technical equipment manufacturer Marked at 90, was one such man - a homebuilder, as they called themselves. For years John designed and built his own CCRs, racking up thousands of dives and uncountable hours of insight and experience in rebreather technologies in the process. It was

off the back of this passion - and the not insignificant associated skills - that John turned his hobby into a business.

While the days of working out of a garage may have long gone, John's insatiable appetite for hands-on engineering remains as strong as ever - alongside the serious business of servicing JJ rebreathers and Shearwater computers, John can be found building his own pressure chamber or playing with his laser machine. It is this passion for engineering coupled with a continued desire to improve and evolve products that has seen Marked at 90 develop into the company it is today - John will always be a homebuilder at heart, he just gets to use increasingly more sophisticated equipment.

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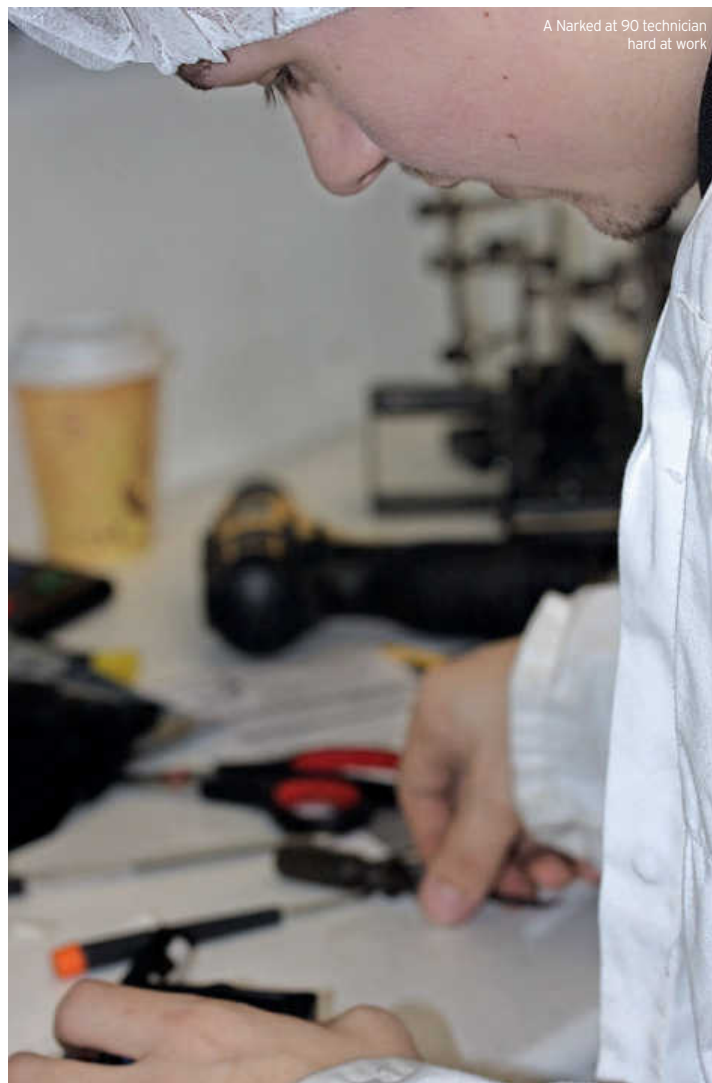


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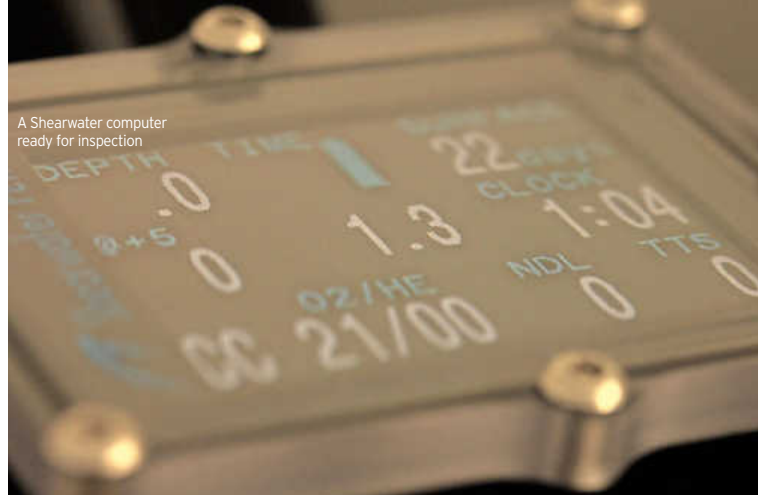


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A Narked at 90 technician hard at work



A Shearwater computer ready for inspection

As well as being a JJ and Shearwater service centre, Narked at 90 is also involved with firms such as Liquivision and Pathfinder. The company's involvement with Shearwater goes well beyond UK servicing: it is also the service centre for Europe, Asia and the US, as well as CE-tester and UK distributor. Narked at 90 also makes and CE-tests parts for a variety of other well known companies, such as AP Valves and Megaladon. The company has, in the past, even worked for NATO.

Most of the products tested on site are available to buy directly from Narked at 90. This branching out from simply servicing has seen the company's customer base and reputation grow rapidly, particularly in the US and Australia. John also has a network of approximately 50 dealers through who he sells his manufactured products, though - as is the case with most producers - he prefers to deal directly with the consumer.

The lab was busy when Sport Diver visited, technicians in lab coats and plastic hairnets hard at work with soldering irons, their faces buried in the innards of JJs or their eyes pressed against the glass of a microscope as they navigated the intricacies of a Shearwater circuit board. The environment was a clinical one, cleanliness of the upmost importance - there's no margin for error in this business.

John talks us through the pressure chamber, which can replicate a 400m dive, and the vacuum chamber, which removes air spaces from products. Both these machines were made by John, which means he knows the machine's history and quality - and he also had the fun of building it!

As we walk around the lab, various cardboard boxes are opened and their contents analysed, reports are read and decisions made on what courses of action need to be taken to solve various problems. There is a pleasant atmosphere to the place - the staff seem to enjoy tinkering and fixing as much as John, though the fiddly soldering jobs seem to be palmed off at every opportunity. There's always one job that everyone loathes...

Plans are afoot to move into a new, larger space to accommodate the increase in demand for Narked at 90's services. Having visited the premises, seen the team at work and, most importantly, witnessed the depth to which John's knowledge runs, it is no surprise that this company's profile is on the up and that such reputable outfits within the diving industry trust John and his team to manufacture parts and service products that divers rely on to keep them alive. ■

For more information on Narked at 90, check out the website:

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Buddy Dive is excited to announce their upcoming technical diving event - Bonaire TeK 2015. From 10-24 October, Buddy Dive Resort and Buddy Dive TeK will be dedicated to showing all guests the ins and outs of technical diving. On top of that, those already certified tech-diving guests get the chance to talk to the pros, try new tech gear, take advantage of gas mixes at special prices and join dedicated tech boat dives with extended bottom times of up to two hours to discover the deeper waters of Bonaire. The event is also committed to making tech diving accessible to recreational divers that simply want to try it out and see how it works.

During these two weeks, Buddy Dive will be hosting members of the tech-diving industry. You can expect to see world-renowned tech-diving manufacturers such as Dive Rite, Halcyon, HammerHead, Subgravity and Hollis. They will be giving dive equipment demos and you can try their equipment, from top-of-the-line regulators to sidemount BCDs and CCR units at no extra cost. Feel free to discuss your questions with the 'big guys' and gain some of their expertise that will be priceless to your future diving. Buddy Dive will also have the leaders in tech-diving education: PADI, GUE, NAUI, TDI and IANTD. They will be offering you try-out clinics and certification opportunities throughout the week. There will be a wide range of courses available from different agencies, so you can compare training agencies to find the one that suits your needs the best. Receive instruction and advice in English, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and Papiamentu... you choose! Make your reservation in advance to be sure you have a spot reserved for your preferred course. Tech equipment will be free of charge to all participants taking a course.

Attend presentations about CCRs, cave diving, wreck diving, decompression strategies and more. On top of that, gas mixes such as trimix will be available at special rates to all certified divers, and a ten percent discount will be offered on custom cases, as well as Sofnolime 8/12, Sofnodive and ExtendAir cartridges.

If you are not a tech diver yet but are interested in being part of this exciting world, this is your chance. Test new limits, learn new safety skills, become a safer diver and a better dive buddy - you don't want to miss Bonaire TeK 2015. If you are a tech diver looking for a great dive destination that can handle your technical needs, allow you new explorations and excitement, then Bonaire TeK 2015 will be the perfect event for you on your vacation. Buddy Dive Resort and Buddy Dive TeK invite you to come and stay with them, and redefine the limits to your vacation and diving. They hope to see you there. Contact: tekdiving@buddydive.com or reservations@buddydive.com if you have questions or wish to book for Bonaire TeK 2015. ■



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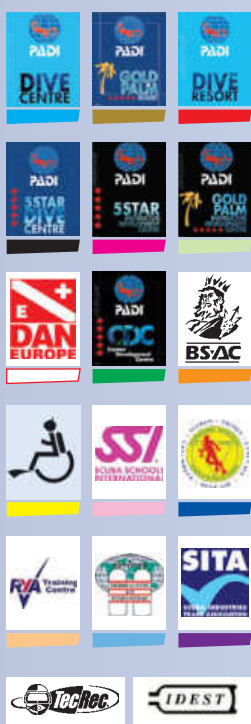
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AIP.....All inclusive package
AT.....Airport transfers
AYRD.....All year round diving
BH.....Boat hire
CAOS.....Compressed air onsite
CH.....Car hire
EA.....Environment activities
EH.....Equipment hire
ESI.....English speaking instructors
FCF.....Families catered for
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NDCF.....Non-divers catered for
OWs.....Other watersports
TD.....Tech diving
UWP.....Underwater photography

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Tel: 0208 546 8882
Email: info@aquanautscuba.co.uk
Website: www.aquanautscuba.co.uk
Opening Hours: Monday - 11am-6pm, Tuesday - 11am-6pm, Wednesday - 11am-6pm, Thursday 11am - 7pm, Friday - 11am-6pm, Saturday - 10am - 6pm, Sunday - by appointment. Nitrox & Air to 300bar, 5★ IDC Centre / IDEST and BSAC Centre. SITA member. OSS OST BS CAOS EH TD. Courses from beginner to instructor, Fully stocked dive shop with excellent purchasing advice, Friendly and very active dive clubwith UK and overseas trips and social.



MIDDLESEX

G & H DIVING SERVICES LTD

Unit 1, Willow House,
River Gardens,
N Feltham Trading Estate,
TW14 0RD.
Tel: 020 8751 3771 / 020 8890 3302
Fax: 020 8751 2591
E-mail: gerryhassell@gheng.com
Website: Under construction
Opening Hours: 8.30 - 5.30 Mon to Friday.
8.30 - 12 noon Sat.
Air to 300 Bar. BSAC, TDI, SDI & PSA. EH, TD, CAOS. Cylinder testing IDEST 2v, Regulator servicing, Air, Nitrox, Trimix, TDI Technical courses. Suit repairs.



SUSSEX

OCEAN VIEW DIVING SERVICES LTD

160 South Street,
Lancing,
West Sussex
BN15 8AU.
Tel: 01903 767224
Fax: 01903 754361
Email: info@oceanviewdiving.co.uk
Website: www.oceanviewdiving.co.uk
PADI 5★ IDC Centre. IANTD, TDI, OSS, OST, EH, BS. Air to 300 Bar, Nitrox. Padi Tec Rec. Tri-mix. Mail order, suit repairs, holidays abroad, on-site indoor pool. Licenced bar and club. Largest selection of equipment in Sussex.



YORKSHIRE

THE DIVERS WAREHOUSE

911 Wakefield Road,
Tong, Bradford,
West Yorkshire,
BD4 7QA
Tel: 01274 307 555
Email: sales@diverswarehouse.co.uk
Website: www.diverswarehouse.co.uk
Opening Hours: 8.30 - 17.30 Mon - Sat , Thursday 8.30 - 20.30, Sunday Closed. Air to (BAR) 300. EH, ESI, TD, EA, FCF, AYRD, UWP, CAOS. Nitrox. PADI 5★, SSI. Servicing, Cylinder testing (IDEST approved), Equipment Hire, Large Equipped shop with changing facilities, classroom, online sales, large parking area, PADI + SSI courses. Everything Scuba!



ROBIN HOOD WATERSPORTS

152 Leeds Road,
Heckmondwike,
West Yorkshire
WF16 9BJ
Tel: 01924 444888
Fax: 01924 474529
E-mail: sally@roho.co.uk
Website: www.roho.co.uk
Opening Hours: Open Times: Mon, Tues, Weds, Fri - 9.15-6pm Thurs 9.15-8pm Sat - 9.15 -5pm. OSS,OST, BS, IDEST, EH, Nitrox. PADI Dive Centre, BSAC Premier level. Training in our on-site heated pool and lecture rooms. Home of the renowned ROHO drysuits. Nitrox courses & fills. Gigantic 5000sq ft showroom fully stocked with dive watersports & snowboarding equipment. Friendly, helpful staff and instructors. Equipment hire.

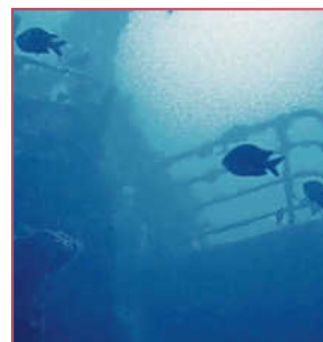


IRELAND

CO CORK

OCEANADDICTS

Kinsale, Co. Cork, Ireland
Tel: 00353 (0)87-7903211
Email: anne@oceanaddicts.ie
Website: www.oceanaddicts.ie
Opening Hours: 9.00am to 6.00pm. Air to 300, PADI Resort, DAN, LB, ESI, ACC, AT, UWP, NDCF, CAOS, Nitrox. Liveboard and day-boat diving, groups and individuals welcome, friendly atmosphere, wrecks and reefs, great photo opportunities, courses available, live the adventure on Ireland's South Coast.



CO DONEGAL

MEVAGH DIVE CENTRE LTD

Milford Road, Carrigat,
Letterkenny,
Co. Donegal, Ireland
Tel: 00353 749154708
Mob: 00353 8765 90264

Email: reception@mevaghdiving.com
Website: www.mevaghdiving.com

Opening Hours: 9am to 7.30pm. Air to 300 Bar,
PADI 5★ Dive Centre, EH, ESI, TD, AIP, Acc, FCF, AT,
AYRD, UWP, CH, BH, NDCF, CAOS, Nitrox, Tri Mix.
Mevagh Dive Centre PADI 5★. All levels of diving
including Technical diving. 11m catamaran with
dive lift. Accommodation with Swimming pool.



NORTHERN IRELAND

COUNTY DOWN

DV DIVING

138 Mount Steward Road, Newtownards,
Co. Down, BT22 2ES.

Tel: 02891 464671/861686
Fax: 02891 464671

Email: info@dvdiving.co.uk

Website: www.dvdiving.co.uk

OSS, OST, BS, EH. DV Diving offer one of Europe's
most comprehensive ranges of scuba, technical &
commercial diving and powerboat training courses
- for the complete beginner through to instructor
development for the most experienced
professionals



PORTSTEWART

AQUAHOLICS DIVE CENTRE

14 Portmore Road,
Portstewart
Tel: 28 70832584

Email: dive@aquaholics.org

Website: www.aquaholics.org

Opening Hours: 9am to 5pm. Air to 300 Bar.
PADI 5★ CENTRE. NITROX, TRIMIX. EH, ESI, TD,
EA, AIP, ACC, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, CH, BH, NDCF,
CAOS. Offering the full range of courses from
Beginner to Trimix. Diving the spectacular clear
water of the North Coast from Rathlin Island to
Malin Head.



OVERSEAS DIVE OPERATORS

AUSTRALIA

LIVEABOARD



Australia - Cairns

Spirit of Freedom

www.spiritoffreedom.com.au

Passengers	26	Elec.	240
Cabins	11	Courses	Y
En-suite	Y	AirCon	Y
Length	37m	Nitrox	Y
Hull	Steel	CCR	N

LIVEABOARD



Australia - Cairns, Queensland

Spoilsport

www.mikeball.com

Passengers	29	Elec.	240
Cabins	15	Courses	Y
En-suite	Y	AirCon	Y
Length	30m	Nitrox	Y
Hull	Aluminium	CCR	Y

BALI

AQUAMARINE DIVING - BALI

2A Jalan Petitenget,
Kuta,
Bali, 80361, Indonesia
Tel: +623614738020

Email: info@AquaMarineDiving.com

Website: www.AquaMarineDiving.com

Opening Hours: We are open 7 days a week and
from 7am to 7pm.

Air to (BAR) 200. EH, LB, ESI, EA, AIP, Acc, FCF, AT,
AYRD, UWP, CH, BH, NDCF, CAOS. Nitrox. 5★ Dive
Resort. AquaMarine Diving - Bali is dedicated to
ensuring you experience Bali's best diving, from
Day Trips to fully-inclusive underwater macro-
photography Safaris, Intro-diving and Snorkelling,
PADI courses to Divemaster and many Specialties
(including the Manta Ray Awareness Specialty).



CAYMAN ISLANDS

SUNSET HOUSE - GRAND CAYMAN'S HOTEL FOR DIVERS BY DIVERS

390 South Church Street
PO Box 479GT Grand Cayman
Cayman Islands

Tel: 1-345-949-7111

Fax: 1-345-949-7101

Email: keith.sahm@sunsethouse.com

Website: www.sunsethouse.com

Opening Hours: 7:00 - 17:30 (Dive Centre
Hours). Air To 200 Bar. Stingray City and ex-USS
Kittiwake Adventures. PADI 5★ IDC. EH, ESI, EA,
Acc, FCF, AT (with packages), AYRD, UWP, CH,
BH, NDCF, CAOS (with packages). Full-Service
dive operations located at Sunset House.
Recreational boat dives. Incredible shore diving.
Nitrox. Cathy Church. U/W photo centre. 53
Rooms for accommodations. Bar, restaurant
onsite. Stepping out of my room, catching that
breath of fragrant tropical breeze, gazing into
the alluring blue water...I found the essence of
Sunset House.



CYPRUS

ALPHA DIVERS

2 Pyla Gardens, Dhekelia Road,
Larnaca, Pyla Tourist Area,
7081, Cyprus

Tel: +357 24647519

+357 99866383

Email: info@alpha-divers.com

Website: www.alpha-divers.com

5 star PADI Instructor Development & Tec Rec
Centre, BSAC Tec Centre and Seamanship Centre
offering the very highest in course from beginner
to Instructor.



CYDIVE DIVE CYPRUS

20, Myrra Complex 33, Poseidonos Ave 1,
Paphos 8042, Cyprus.

Tel: 00 357 26 934271

Email: info@cydive.com

Website: www.cydive.com

PADI. The First PADI 5★ Career Development Centre &
Centre of Excellence in Cyprus. CAOS, EH, CHAIPAcc,
FCFAT, ESI's, EA's, BH, AYRD, UWP, OW's, NDCF. Fantastic
Location, an exciting programme with 2 Boat Dives &
Daytrips Daily. Instructor programmes 4 times a year.



LARNACA DIVE-IN

HTTC Ltd (Hyperbaric Therapy Treatment Ctr)
Poseidonia Medical Centre
47a Eleftherias Avenue,
Aradippou, Larnaca,
CYPRUS 7102

Tel: 00357 24 252501/24 hr

Emergency Diver Help Line 99 518837

Fax: 00357 24 252502

Email: info@hbocyprus.com

Website: www.hbocyprus.com

Opening Hours: 9:5 Mon - Sat.

24/7 Emergency Diver Response. Air to 232 Bar.
If you are concerned or feel that you have unusual
signs or symptoms after a dive please always get it
checked. We have a 24/7, 365 days service with a
full Hyperbaric Medical team on standby at our 14
man fully computerized, HAUZ 2200 Starmed Unit.
We are the Preferred Provider for IDAN, UK Armed
Forces, US Armed Forces, NATO and many more. We
offer Direct Insurance billing for all treatments. Also
Dry Dives to 40 metres, PADI Chamber Specialty
Courses, DAN In-Chamber Tender Courses, DAN
Chamber Operator Courses, DAN Consumer and
Instructor Courses to all Levels.



EGYPT

LIVEABOARD



Egypt, Sharm El Sheikh

VIP One

www.vipone.com

Passengers	16	Elec.	220
Cabins	8	Courses	Y
En-suite	Y	AirCon	Y
Length	29m	Nitrox	Y
Hull	Wood	CCR	N

LIVEABOARD



Egypt

South Moon

www.seaqueen.com

Passengers	20	Elec.	240/110
Cabins	10	Courses	Y
En-suite	Y	AirCon	Y
Length	27m	Nitrox	Y
Hull	Wood	CCR	N



CAMEL DIVE CLUB & HOTEL

Centre of Na'ama Bay,

PO Box 10,

Sharm El Sheikh,

South Sinai,

Egypt.

Tel: +20 69 3600 700

Fax: +20 69 3600 601

Email: info@cameldive.com

Website: www.cameldive.com

PADI 5★ Gold Palm IDC Centre, BSAC, Acc. AT, LB,
ESI, EA, BH, AYRD, UWP, OW, NDCF, TD, CAOS, EH,
FCF. The Red Seas friendliest diver hotel and dive
centre. Join us for spectacular diving and the best
apres dive in Sharm.
Established 1986



EAGLE DIVERS

Ocean Club Hotel,

23 City Council Street,

Hadaba,

Sharm el Sheikh

Tel: 002 01200001590

002 01200001591

Email: info@eagle-divers.com

Website: www.eagle-divers.com

Opening Hours: 8:00am - 6:00pm

PADI 5★ resort & TecRec Centre.

Nitrox. Air to 220 Bar. EH, LB, ESI, TD, EA, AIP,
Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, NDCF, CAOS. Providing
first class personalised service in one of the
worlds top diving destinations.
We pride ourselves on making your Red Sea
holiday the best it can be.



OVERSEAS DIVE OPERATORS

EMPEROR DIVERS

15 New Kawthar, Airport Road, Hurghada, Egypt
Tel: (+20) 122 234 0995
Email: info@emperordivers.com
Web: www.emperordivers.com
Opening Hours: See website.
EH, LB, ESI, TD, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, NDCf, Nitrox, PADI 5★ Year-round diving: the Maldives and Red Sea: El Gouna, Marsa Alam, Hamata and Sharm El Sheikh and Emperor liveaboards. Day diving, dive courses, resort packages.



ELITE DIVING'S DIVERS UNITED

Uni Sharm Hotel, Sharm Elysees St, Um El Sid Hill, Hadaba, Sharm El Sheikh
Tel: 0020 1224 308 780
Email: info@elite-diving.com
Web: www.elite-diving.com
Opening Hours: 8.00am to 19.00pm
Air to 220 Bar. Divers United PADI 5 Resort. Elite Diving. BSAC Diver Training Center. EH, LB, ESI, EA, AIP, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, BH, NDCf, CAOS. NITROX, ATOL Bonded through UK Tour operator. British Owner managers, offering Daily Boat Diving on some of the best reefs in the world, House reef, PADI & BSAC courses, Liveaboards, Special excursions.



ILIOS DIVE CLUB

Steigenberger Al Dau Resort, Hurghada, Red Sea, Egypt
Tel: 0020 65 346 5442
Email: info@ilioldiveclub.com
Website: www.ilioldiveclub.com
Opening Hours: 8am - 5pm
Air to 200 Bar, Nitrox, Padi Course up to Divemaster, Handicapped diving, Snorkeling. EH, ESI, EA, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, BH, NDCf, CAOS. Ilios Dive Club - One with the Red Sea. The Steigenberger Al Dau Resort, Red Sea, Hurghada is the home of Ilios Dive Club. On an area of 360m² we are offering everything diver, skin diver and those going to be need to have a perfect holiday. Due to over 20 years of experience in the professional management of a dive centre we guarantee our guests wonderful dives in the Red Sea.



OCEAN COLLEGE

Naama Bay Hotel, Naama Bay, Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt
Tel: 0020 1228075516
Email: info@ocean-college.com
Website: www.ocean-college.com
Opening Hours: 0800 - 1700.
Air to 300 Bar. PADI 5★ IDC, Nitrox, ATOL Bonded. EH, ESI, EA, AIP, FCF, AYRD, UWP, BH, NDCf, CAOS. Ocean College dive centre's are located at the Naama bay hotel, the Hilton Waterfalls and the Sensori resort..



RED SEA DIVING COLLEGE

Sultana Building, Naama Bay, South Sinai, Egypt
Tel: 0020 69 3600145
Email: info@redseacollege.com
Website: www.redseacollege.com
Opening hours: 8am - 9pm.
Air to 200 Bar. EH, LB, ESI, TD, EA, ACC, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, BH, NDCf, CAOS. Nitrox, National Geographic. PADI 5★ CDC. Multi Award winning centre offering all courses from entry level to professional. Conducted from a stunning beach-front location, boasting the best facilities in Sharm.



SHARKS BAY UMBI DIVING CENTER

P O Box 275, Sharks Bay, Sharm el Sheikh, South Sinai, Egypt
Tel: +20 122 714 2029
+20 69 3600942
Email: info@sharksbay.com
Website: www.sharksbay.com
Opening hours: 8am to 6pm Mon - Sun. Air to 200 Bar. EH, LB, ESI, TD, EA, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, BH, NDCf, CAOS. Nitrox, PADI 5★ and SSI Dive Centre. Sharks Bay Umbi Diving Village combines Bedouin style, warm hospitality and modern facilities. You really will come as a guest but leave as a friend.



SINAI COLLEGE - DIVING CENTER

Sharm Inn Amarin, Hadaba, Sharm El Sheikh South Sinai 60907, Egypt
Tel: +201154055100
Email: info@sina-college.com
Website: www.sina-college.com
Opening hours: 7.30am till 7pm every day of the year. Air to 200 Bar. EH, LB, ESI, EA, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, NDCf, COAS. Nitrox, PADI Dive Centre. We are an European run and managed dive center based in Sharm El Sheikh with a friendly and professional atmosphere. We provide daily diving, mini safaris and liveaboards.



FUERTEVENTURA

DEEP BLUE DIVING S.L

Barcelo el Castillo, Caleta de Fuste, Fuerteventura, 35610
Tel: +34 606 275 468 or
+34 928 163 172
Email: info@deep-blue-diving.com
Website: www.deep-blue-diving.com
Facebook: Deep.Blue.Diving.Fuerteventura
Opening Hours: All year 9am-5pm
Air to 200. PADI 5★ GOLD PALM IDC CENTRE & IE LOCATION. EH, ESI, AIP, ACC, FCF, AYRD, UWP, NDCf, CAOS. WIFI, Equipment Washing and Storage Rooms. Discover Scuba to Instructor. All year round, water front location, small groups, 20-25m visibility. Exclusive dive sites, after dive sector.



GRAN CANARIAS

BLUE WATER DIVING

Holiday Club Puerto Calma, Avenida Joaquin Blanco Torrent 2, City: Puerto Rico, Mogan State, Las Palmas, 35130, Spain
Tel: +34602080208
+34633963248
Email: info@divinggrancanaria.com
Website: www.divinggrancanaria.com
Opening Hours: 9am until 6pm Monday - Sunday. Air to 200 bar. EH, ESI, Acc, AYRD, NDCf, CAOS. PADI 5★ Dive Centre. All year round diving, boat and shore dives. Ideal for all level of divers. Special offers for groups, families and dive packages. Divemaster internships available.



GREECE

CRETE UNDERWATER CENTER

Mirabello Beach Hotel, Agios Nikolaos 72100 Crete, Greece. PO Box 100
Tel/Fax: 00 30 284 1022 406
Mobile: 0030 6945 2444 34 / 0030 6944 1268 46
Email: info@creteunderwatercenter.com
Website: www.creteunderwatercenter.com
PADI Resort D.C., Day Boats/ Servicing/ Accommodation/ Technical/ IANTD/ PADI/BSAC Resort Center/Air /Nitrox/ Trimix/ KitionSale. Based within a hotel complex directly on the beach, we provide a great variety of diving services for Beginners through to Advanced and Technical Divers. As a well equipped resort and diving centre, we tailor packages to suit your individual or group needs.



NERO-SPORT DIVING CENTER

Limni Keri, Machairado, Zakynthos 29092 Greece
Tel: 0030 269 502 8481
0030 698 566 6645
Email: dennis@nero-sport.de
Website: www.nero-sport.de
Opening Hours: All Year, Everyday 9:30 - 18:00 (Except 15.11. - 15.12.)
Air to 200 Bar. PADI DIVE CENTRE, IAC 5★ EH, ESI, Acc, AT, FCF, AYRD, UWP, NDCf, CAOS. Free childcare. 2-5 trips a day. Day trips. Night diving. Own accommodation. Snack bar. Great family offers. Special group offers. Diving all year round.



GALAPAGOS

LIVEABOARD

San Cristobal, Galapagos
M/V Galapagos Sky
www.galapagosky.com

Passengers.....16	Elec.....110/220
Cabins.....8	Courses.....Y
En-suite.....Y	AirCon.....Y
Length.....30m	Nitrox.....Y
Hull.....Steel	CCR.....N

HONDURAS

LIVEABOARD

Utila, Bay Islands of Honduras
M/V Caribbean Pearl II
www.bayislandsyachtcharters.com

Passengers.....18	Elec.....220
Cabins.....9	Courses.....Y
En-suite.....Y	AirCon.....Y
Length.....36m	Nitrox.....Y
Hull.....Aluminium	CCR.....N

UTILA DIVE CENTRE/MANGO INN

Utila, Bay Islands, Honduras
Tel/Fax: (504) 24253327
Email: info@utiladivecentre.com
Website: www.utiladivecentre.com
www.goproutila.com
Opening Hours: 7am to 7pm
Air to 220 Bar. PADI Career Development Centre and IANTD facility. Nitrox, Trimix, Rebreather friendly, National Geographic Facility. EH, ESI, TD, EA, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, CAOS. PADI certification courses from beginner to Instructor (monthly PADI IDC's) with diving packages and accommodation. The island of Utila offers spectacular Caribbean diving and Whale sharks.



INDONESIA

BIG BUBBLE DIVE

Turtle Beach, Gili Trawangan, Lombok NTB, Indonesia 83233.
Tel: +623706125020
+62811390969
Email: info@bigbubblediving.com
Website: www.bigbubblediving.com
Open: 8am to 7pm daily all year round
Established in 2001 by UK Owner Anna Walker, The crystal clear waters (up to 40m visibility) will ensure you see the very best of the aquatic life that diving in Indonesia has to offer.



BLUE MARLIN DIVE

Gili Trawangan, Gili Meno, Gili Air, Senggigi, Lombok, Indonesia.
Tel: ++62 (0) 370 632424
Fax: ++62 (0) 370 642286
Email: info@bluemarindive.com
Website: www.bluemarindive.com
PADI 5★ Premier IDC Centre. Acc., AT, LB, ESI, EA, BH, AYRD, UWP, OW, NDCf, TD, EH, CH, AIP, CAOS, FCF. The Gili Islands most professional & friendly 5★ IDC Centre (established 16 years). Spectacular world class ocean diving. Ocean front restaurant, bar, night club & freshwater pool. Full retail dive shop on site. DM internship programmes. Full technical diving facility offering TDI & IANTD. Blue Marlin has it's own luxury liveboard offering trips throughout the Indonesian Archipelago. Packages available.



TWO FISH DIVERS

One operator/three tropical-island resorts:
Bunaken Island, North Sulawesi Lembeh Straits, North Sulawesi
Lembongan Island, Bali
Tel: 0062-811-432-805
Email: info@twofishdivers.com
Website: www.twofishdivers.com
Air to 200 bar. PADI 5★ IDC. Nitrox, EH, ESI, TD, EA, AIP, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, NDCf, CAOS. Two Fish Divers is owned and run by Tina and Nigel from UK. Each of their three tropical-island resorts offer a friendly and relaxed atmosphere with some of the best diving in Indonesia:
1) Bunaken Island, North Sulawesi - the award-winning reefs of Bunaken Marine Park.
2) Lembeh Straits, North Sulawesi - the muck-diving capital of the world.
3) Lembongan Island, Bali - home of the mola-mola's and manta's of Bali.
All dive resorts are PADI 5★, have European management, max 24 divers, small dive groups, and a friendly and personal service. Organise a trip to one of more of these resorts, or book an Indo Dive Safari with all three resorts!



LANZAROTE

MANTA DIVING LANZAROTE

Juan Carlos 1, No.6, Local 5, Puerto del Carmen
Tel: (0034) 928 516815
Mobile: (0034) 649 121142
Email: info@manta-diving-lanzarote.com
manta-diving-lanzarote-val@hotmail.com
Skype: manta-dive-centre
Website: www.manta-diving-lanzarote.com
Opening hours: Mon-Sat 8.30-5.30pm all year round. Air to 200 Bar. PADI IRRA RESORT CENTRE, BSAC RESORT CENTRE. OSS, ACC, AT, AYRD, BH, CAOS, CH, NDCf, EA, EH, UWP, ESI, FCF. PADI. Courses & Specialties, Discover Scuba & Snorkelling. Fully equipped, spacious centre, 150mtrs from best sites in Lanzarote. Group Rates All level of divers welcome. NITROX.



SAFARI DIVING LANZAROTE

Playa de la Barrilla 4, Playa Chica Puerto Del Carmen,
Tel: 0034 928511992 or 0034 646752512
Email: enquiry@safaridiving.com
Website: www.safaridiving.com
PADI, PADI 5★ Centre, BSAC, PADI Premier Centre, NAUI, SAA, Acc, AT, LB, ESI, EAs, BH, AYRD, UWP, OWs, NDCf, ATOL, TD, CAOS, EH, CH, AIP, FCF. SSI & RYA. We are a PADI dive centre. BSAC Premier Centre and Seamanship Centre. SSI Diver Training Centre. British owned, beach based diving centre, established for over 18 years. Spectacular Ocean diving all year round which include reefs, drop offs, wrecks etc to suit all levels of diver and the complete beginner! Special offers available for dive packages for shore, night and boat dives.



MALDIVES

SUB AQUA DIVECENTER

Sub Aqua Dive Center - Thailand/Oman/ Maldives, Angaga, Thulhagiri & Furaveri
Tel: +498938476959
Thailand: +66800523101
Email: info@subaqua-divecenter.com
Website: www.subaqua-divecenter.com
Opening Hours: 08.00 - 19.00 EVERYDAY.
PADI 5★ SSI, EH, LB, ESI, EA, FCF, AYRD, UWP, BH, NDCF, CAOS, Nitrox. Located in Phuket (Thailand), Salalah (Oman) and Maldives. Thailand liveaboard experts. Quality services and full range of diving courses and facilities. Multi-lingual diving Instructor teams. ■

EMPEROR DIVERS

15 New Kawthar, Airport Road, Hurghada, Egypt
Tel: (+20) 122 234 0995
Email: info@emperordivers.com
Web: www.emperordivers.com
Opening Hours: See website.
EH, LB, ESI, TD, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, NDCF, Nitrox, PADI 5★ Year-round diving: the Maldives and Red Sea: El Gouna, Marsa Alam, Hamata and Sharm El Sheikh and Emperor liveaboards. Day diving, dive courses, resort packages. ■

MALTA

DIVE DEEP BLUE MALTA

9/11 Annanija Street, Bugibba, St Pauls Bay, Malta SPB 1320
Tel: 00 356 21 583946
Mob: 00 356 99 868957
Email: dive@divedeepblue.com
Website: www.divedeepblue.com
Opening Hours: 8am till 6pm.
PADI 5★ IDC, EH, ESI, TD, EA, AIP, Acc, FCF, AT, AYRD, UWP, CH, BH, NDCF, CAOS, Nitrox / Trimix. Facilities include: Dive Shop, Private parking, swimming pool, sun deck, gas filling/blending station, equipment rental/sales, drying and storage areas, toilets/ showers, A/C class rooms, technical facility, CCR support. ■ ■ ■

DIVESHACK SCUBA SCHOOL

14a, Qui Si Sana, Seafront, Sliema, SLM3111, Malta
Tel: 00 356 2133 8558
 00 356 9999 3483
Email: info@divemalta.com
Website: www.divemalta.com
Opening Hours: 7 Days a week from 08.00 till 18.00 (17.00 in winter).
PADI 5★ IDC, National Geographic and TecRec Facility. Seafront Location. Resident Course Director. All PADI Courses Taught. Rebreather Friendly. Escorted Dives from Shore/Boat round Malta, Gozo and Comino. Fully Stocked Shop. Operating from Comino May to Oct. Nitrox, Trimix, National Geographic. Speciality side mount and Tec side mount. Acc, AIP, AT, AYRD, BH, BS, CAOS, CH, EA, EH, ESI, FCF, NDCF, OSS + OWS, OST, TD, UWP, ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

DIVEWISE

Westin Dragonara Resort, Malta
Tel: (+356) 21 356 441
Email: info@divewise.com.mt
Website: www.divewise.com.mt
Opening Hours: 7 days a week from 9am till finish.
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Cabins.....12	Courses.....Y
En-suite.....Y	AirCon.....Y
Length.....34m	Nitrox.....Y
Hull.....Steel	CCR.....Y

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Nautilus Explorer
www.nautilusexplorer.com

Passengers.....25	Elec.....120
Cabins.....13	Courses.....N
En-suite.....Y	AirCon.....Y
Length.....35m	Nitrox.....Y
Hull.....Steel	CCR.....Y

LIVEABOARD

Mexico
Nautilus Belle Amie
www.nautilusbelleamie.com

Passengers.....30	Elec.....120
Cabins.....17	Courses.....N
En-suite.....Y	AirCon.....Y
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Hull.....Steel	CCR.....Y

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Cabins.....9	Courses.....Y
En-suite.....Y	AirCon.....Y
Length.....31m	Nitrox.....Y
Hull.....Steel	CCR.....Y

LIVEABOARD

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www.solitude-one.com

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Cabins.....10	Courses.....Y
En-suite.....Y	AirCon.....Y
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Hull.....Steel	CCR.....Y

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